OLD BALLADS IN PROSE

By Eva March Tappan

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OLD BALLADS IN PROSE

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"WE'RE NOT HALFWAY," SAID DONALD

OLD BALLADS IN PROSE ⚜ ⚜ BY EVA MARCH TAPPAN ⚜ ILLUSTRATED BY FANNY Y. CORY ⚜ ⚜

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND CO.
BOSTON AND NEW YORK 1901

Other ed. Z. 40B 15.1

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Jan. 17, 1929
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Published October, 1901

PREFACE

THERE is no more fascinating chapter of literature than that of the old English ballads. Never bound to an author or a date, coming from "out of the everywhere," welcome as a summer breeze wherever they chanced to make their way, and free as a breeze to whoever chose to enjoy them, they were handed down from singer to singer, changing with the fancies of many minstrels and many generations. Far removed from the completions of the literary world, they are poetry a-making. They are but a voice in the wilderness, and yet they are fairly throbbing with human life and with that flood-tide of human feeling which makes all the centuries as one.

The ballads picture a simple people, loving the primitive virtues of endurance in the woman and valor in the man, of faithfulness in the servant and generosity in his lord. If their quiet acceptance of whatever fate has brought has sometimes a touch of pathos, it will at least give us a moment's freedom from the wearisome struggle "to better one's self,"

which may, perhaps, be counted some day as the distinguishing mark of our age.

These people who do in Ballad Land abide have a hearty relish for humor and a healthy love for the out of doors, qualities which have kept their descendants from many absurdities and artificialities. They have a robust sense of justice, though its crudeness sees no fault in Robin Hood's taking from the rich to give to the poor, or in rescuing a fearless and free-handed lawbreaker from the clutches of the less appreciative sheriff. They have, too, the reverence of the unthinking for rank and position. No wrong is quite so bitter if inflicted by a "lord of high degree." No scapegrace is quite unpardonable if he is of noble birth, especially if he has somewhere suffered a bit of injustice. Not noblesse oblige *but* noblesse s'excuse *is the law of Ballad Land.*

These are the faults of children who have as yet no fixed line between the ideal and the actual. Childish, too, is the imagination of the ballad in both its simplicity and its omnipotence. The flights of the imagination that is chastened by science are thrilling, but there is also a winsome charm in the childlike fancy that has no

fear of the impossible or the incompatible. The fugitive rides his horse without food or rest for a year and a day; the avenger springs over the wall of the castle; the champion slays fifteen men, and after dinner is ready to meet other fifteen, who have surrounded him in his retreat; all the belongings of a king must be rich and rare, and so in Ballad Land the royal boat must be of gold and its masts of silver. No one need stop to consider whether silver and gold would be good working materials for the imperial navy; in that happy country "All things are as they seem to all."

In this little journey into Ballad Land I have not often kept my story rigidly within the limits of the ballad narrative, but have rather told the tale that seemed to me to lie in and around and about the ballad — sometimes making the circle touch all the main points of the inscribed story; sometimes following the paths that the ballad itself seemed to suggest; and once or twice, taking a single line or even a haunting name for a starting point, I have ventured to ramble over Ballad Land as freely as did the ballad-makers themselves. But at most I have taken no more liberties than the men

of the olden time did gladly accord to any wandering harper, even to one whose fate it was to follow closely upon the steps of some incomparable master of minstrelsy.

EVA MARCH TAPPAN.

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Drawn by Fanny Y. Cory

OLD BALLADS IN PROSE

SADDLE TO RAGS

"WIFE," said the simple old man, "it 's time to pay the rent. How many pounds have we in the house? I must get on old Tib and hobble along the way to see the landlord."

"There 's the forty pounds that we saved for the last half-year's rent, and that 's under the stone in the fireplace; and there 's the five shillings and three-pence that 's in the pocket of my best church gown; and there 's nineteen shillings and five-pence and one farthing that 's put up in the hole in the chimney; and there 's a penny that I found in the road as I was coming home from the fair; and there 's twenty pounds and one shilling and four-pence that we got for the butter and the eggs, only they brought two-score of the eggs back again after they had kept them so long that they were addled; and there 's the money for the sheep's wool, and that 's out in the corner of old Tib's stall under a wisp of hay, lest thieves should come upon us of a sudden. It 's all put convenient and near to hand, so that if the house

was afire we could find it in the wink of a cat's eye and take care of it. That 's not all, for under the head of the bed in the west room there 's a box, and in the box there 's a wooden bucket, and in the bucket there 's six pounds and eleven shillings and tenpence; and under the front doorstep" — But the simple old man looked bewildered, and began to shake his head and rub his eyes.

"Wife," said he, "could n't you get it together and heap it up and tell me if it 's all right? Then I 'll get on old Tib and go to the landlord, and I 'll say, 'Here 's the forty pounds for the last half-year, and here 's the forty pounds for this half-year. I 'm not very good at the learning, but my wife says it 's all right.'"

"I do believe," rejoined the wife rather sharply, "that I 'd better get on old Tib and go myself."

"I wish you would, I wish you would," pleaded the simple old man meekly. "I 'm always afeard I 'll lose some of the money and be hanged for it."

"No, I 'll not go either," said his wife.

"What 's the use of having a man if he can't do what you tell him?" And so the simple old man got on old Tib and started out of the gate.

"Now, if you meet a thief on the highway, remember to tell him that you 're going to pay the landlord, and that you have fourscore pounds in your leather saddle. You 're so simple that I really believe it 's just what you would do," she said to herself as she shut the door with a slam. She would have been more anxious if she had heard the old man's humble promise, "Yes, wife, I 'll do just what you tell me," as he went out of the gate and into the road.

As he was jogging along the highway, who should come up to him but a fine gentleman riding on a noble black horse, with silver mountings to his saddle and a handsome black portmanteau with silver at the corners.

"Good-morning," said the fine gentleman, and the simple old man answered humbly: —

"Good-morning, and thank you kindly, sir, for speaking so friendly like to a plain old man like me."

"How far are you going?" asked the fine

gentleman; and the old man smiled and answered with a good deal of pride for so humble an old man: —

"I 'm going to pay my rent, sir. It 's only two miles away, sir, where my landlord lives. I did n't pay him the last half-year, but, indeed, sir, it was n't my fault, for he was away."

"And so you 're going to pay him now, are you?"

"Yes," said the simple old man, "I have forty pounds for the last half-year's rent and forty pounds for this half-year's rent. My wife says it 's all right, and she 's good at the counting, my wife is; and she told me that 's what I must say if any one asked me. Some of it 's from the butter and some of it 's from the wool, and there 's a penny that my wife picked up in the road when she came from the fair, but she says it is all right."

"Then it must be," declared the fine gentleman, "but there 's many a thief going about these days, and you ought not to tell any one about your money; you might be robbed."

"Oh no, my wife is far wiser than that,"

said the simple old man, "for she put all the money in my saddle, where no one would look for it."

So the two jogged pleasantly along together, and the old man said to himself that he had never before seen a fine gentleman who was so gracious to him. The fine gentleman asked him about his sheep and how he cared for them, and about his old horse Tib, and how long he had had her. The old man was just telling about what a fine colt she was only twenty-nine years ago, when the road made a sharp turn down a hill, with a brook at the bottom and trees growing thickly all around, and the fine gentleman pulled out a pistol and pointed it full at the simple old man and said: —

"Stand still and give me your money," but the simple old man hesitated and asked: —

"Please tell me, sir, are you a thief?" and the fine gentleman answered: —

"There 's better names for it than that, but what do you want to know for?" and the simple old man replied: —

"My wife told me that if I met a thief on the highway, I was to tell him that I was

going to pay the rent, and that I had four-score pounds in my saddle; but she did not tell me what to do if he told me to give it to him. I 'll have to follow my own wit, and indeed, I have n't much; so I 'll just fling the saddle over the hedge and be rid of it."

The thief threw back his head and laughed.

"Your wife will never find any fault with you if you mind her like that; and yet you never know what a woman will like," he added meditatively, for he was a philosopher as well as a thief. "Now see how well you can mind me," he said. "Stand here and hold my horse while I go over the hedge, and take good care of my portmanteau."

It was not easy to climb through the hedge, for it was all thorns and briers, but the very moment that the thief was through it, the simple old man put his foot in the stirrup of the thief's noble horse and rode away like the wind chasing a hat.

"Hold on!" shouted the thief.

"Yes, sir, I am a-holding on," he cried, "and I 'm a-taking care of the portmanteau, sir, just as you told me to. I 'm a-minding, sir."

"HOLD ON!" SHOUTED THE THIEF

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"Stay," called the thief, "and I 'll give you half of all I 've got."

"My wife did n't tell me to," said the simple old man, "and I don't think she 'd like it if I did. She told me to go to the landlord and pay the rent."

There was nothing for the thief to do but to sit down on the ground and cut open the old man's saddle. The leather was hard, and his sword was rusty, for he was more accustomed to frightening people with it than to cutting their heads off, and it was full three hours by the sun that he worked to get the saddle open; and after all, there was nothing in it but rags, for when the simple old man had once made his way out of his wife's sight, he had taken the money out of the saddle and put it into his bosom, for he said to himself: —

"A man ought to be at the head of his own house, and I 'm going to do what I like with it. I 'm not one bit afraid."

The old man had never sat on so noble a horse before, and had never had such a gallop in all his life as he had that morning. When he came to his landlord's house, he opened

the portmanteau, and the landlord stared in surprise, for there was five hundred pounds in silver and five hundred pounds in good yellow gold.

"And where did you get the silver money, and where did you get the gold?" asked the landlord; and the simple old man answered: —

"I met a man by the way, and he and I swapped horses, and he gave me the silver money and the gold money to boot."

"I don't believe that you ought to go about by yourself with all that money," said the landlord; and the simple old man answered: —

"I don't think any one would hurt such a simple old man as I am; and besides, I always do what my wife tells me to, for she has learning and she can count. Maybe the fine gentleman that I met didn't mind his wife."

The simple old man did not go home by the highway, but by a narrow lane; and far down the road he spied old Tib feeding under a tree, for the fine gentleman had found that he could get on faster without her. So

the simple old man and Tib and the fine gentleman's horse and the fine gentleman's portmanteau with the gold and the silver all went home together; and when his wife saw it, she danced for joy, and she said: —

"Now, old man, see what you get by minding your wife!"

WILLIE WALLACE

"It 's wedded I 'll be to Jock in the morn,
The dearest lad in the town ;
And I 've twenty pennies in my pockét
To buy me a braw new gown."

SO sang the pretty little maid as she kneeled beside the River Tay and washed her lily-white hands in the water. Softly over the stepping-stones came a warrior bold, but the pretty little maid saw him not, for she was playing with the ripples and singing softly over and over:—

"And I 've twenty pennies in my pockét
To buy me a braw new gown."

The warrior bold was tired and hungry, but he smiled as he stood for a moment beside the pretty little maid and listened to her merry song:—

"To buy me a braw new gown,
To buy me a braw new gown."

Then he said:—

"My pretty little maid, do you come from Perth town?"

Then the little maid rose up from the river-side with the shining drops falling from

her lily-white fingers, and she made a low courtesy, as she had been taught to do, and answered: —

"Truly, sir, I live at Perthside."

"And can you tell me what 's the news of the town to-day, little maid?"

"There 's no news at all," said the pretty little maid, "save that in the hostelry there are fifteen great English lords, and they are all waiting to see Willie Wallace, and they say they 'll hang him high as the crow flies."

"Are you sure that 's a true tale, little maid?"

"As sure as that the river flows," said the little maid, "for it 's my own Jock that keeps the inn, and he says that Willie Wallace will have to come up to the town for a bite and a sup before many days."

"Wallace is a traitor and an outlaw, is he not, little maid?"

"So Jock says."

"And do you say so too, little maid?"

"No, sir," said the little maid. "My mother is a Scotch woman, and it 's a happy maiden I 'd be if I could once have a look at our own Willie Wallace. It 's hungry

and cold and weary that he must be far up in the Highlands."

"It's hungry and weary that I am, too, little maid; and if I had but a penny so they would let me in at the hostelry, I would go and beg of the fifteen fine gentlemen who are waiting for Wallace."

"I've twenty pennies in my pocket, sir, and you shall have them all to pay for a bed and a meal at the inn."

So the warrior bold took the twenty pennies and went off toward the inn where the fifteen great English lords were waiting to see William Wallace. On the way he met a sturdy beggar man with a knotted stick in his hand, and over his shoulders was a cloak that had been patched until it was heavier than three coats of mail.

"And what's the news in the town?" asked the warrior bold.

"There's no news at all save that fifteen great English lords are at the inn, and they're all a-waiting till Willie Wallace comes down from the Highlands, for they have sworn that they'll hang him higher than the crow flies."

"Will you lend me your knotted stick, good friend, and will you lend me your well-patched cloak?" asked the warrior bold.

"Keep to your own clothes," growled the sturdy beggar man, "and don't be trying to rob me."

"You 're no Englishman," said the warrior bold.

"And what is that to you?" snarled the sturdy beggar man.

"Only this," said the warrior bold, "that I would whisper a word in your ear." So he whispered a word in the beggar's ear, and the beggar fell on his knees.

"It 's proud I 'll be, sir, that you will wear my cloak. I would it were velvet and ermine. And will you have my hose and my waistcoat, sir, and my shirt, and I 'll wait in the bush till you come back?" So the warrior bold took the beggar's knotted stick and his long, well-mended cloak, and, all bent and bowed, he hobbled to the open door of the inn. There sat the fifteen English lords with their captain, and the beggar man asked of him: —

"Kind sir, will you give me an alms for

the sake of charity?" But the captain only laughed him to scorn, and said: —

"Where did you come from, you bent and crooked carl? Where were you born?"

"I was born in fair Scotland," answered the beggar man. "And it 's hungry and weary that I am. Will you not give an alms to a poor old man?"

"Never a penny to a Scotchman," said the captain, "but I 'd give you fifty pounds of good white money if you 'd show me a glimpse of the traitor that we 're waiting to catch, for there 's nothing fit to eat or to drink in this old town."

"And who might that traitor be?" asked the beggar man meekly. "Mayhap I could give you a sight of him."

"He 's the traitor to good King Edward!" said the captain, "and they call him William Wallace."

"I know him as well as I know myself," said the beggar man, "and I know where he is as well as I know where I am myself; and I could give you a sight of him as well as I could give you a sight of my own face. Tell down your money, and if it is good,

mayhap I could bring him to you before the sun is behind the tower."

So the captain brought out a bag of silver and told him down upon the table fifty good pounds of white money.

"You 've kept your bargain well," said the beggar man, "and I 'll not lack my part. Look well at my face, for you 'll never see it again. I 'm William Wallace myself." And then he threw off the well-mended cloak and straightened himself up and laid about him with the knotted stick until every man in the house was slain except Jock the innkeeper.

"Jock, my man," he called, "see that you cover the table well, for it 's three long days that I 've had nor bite nor sup."

When the warrior bold had eaten his fill, he said: —

"Jock, as you are a true man, will you stand by the English king or will you stand by me?"

"One might as well be a fool if he can't change his mind," said Jock; "and I 'd stand by any man that would kill those fifteen lords, for they 've all found fault with their victuals and their drink."

The warrior smiled.

"Have you no better reason than that?" he asked.

"Well, yes, there is another reason," said Jock, "for there 's a little maid that lives by the river-side, and she 's a'most brought me about to her own way of thinking; but indeed, don't you tell her, sir, for it is n't good that a woman should know that she can turn a man from his way. We 're to be married in the morn, sir, and a man must be at the head of his own house."

"Will you take a bundle for me?" said the warrior bold. "Will you carry the knotted stick and the well-mended cloak and the purse of silver to the beggar man beside the bush? and then will you go further, and when you come to the pretty little maid that dwells by the river-side, will you give her this twenty pounds and tell her that Willie Wallace sends it to her to buy her a wedding gown?"

CATSKIN

THE squire's wife had a little baby daughter, whose skin was like milk and whose lips were like roses, but the squire looked at her and turned away and said: —

"I did n't want a girl. I wanted a boy."

By and by the squire's wife had another little daughter, whose skin was like snow and whose lips were like rubies, but the squire looked at her and turned away and said: —

"I did n't want a girl. I wanted a boy."

The squire's wife said: —

"But you 'll be good to your own little daughter, won't you?" and then the squire was angry, and he said: —

"Yes, I 'll be good to her, but it will be a long way off, for I won't have her in my sight. Send her to a nurse."

So the squire's wife kissed her little baby daughter, and cried over her, and sent her to a dear old friend who lived in the country.

Now the squire gave the little girl fine clothes, so that she wore a silk dress and a gold locket every day, and he sent her teach-

ers to teach her all that there was to be known under the sun; but he never went to see her, and he had never in all her life called her by her name. When she was grown up, she said to herself: —

"My father does n't love me, and he never comes to see me, and I mean to go out into the world to take care of myself." She knew that she must not wear her jewels and her rich clothes, for fear of thieves, and as it was cold weather, she needed a warm dress. She could not pay much for it, and the cheapest one that she could get was made of catskin; so she started out into the world to seek her fortune wearing a catskin gown, and with her jewels and her fine robes tied up into a bundle.

All day long she walked, and at evening she came to a town. She was very tired, for the journey had been wearisome, and she sat down on a doorstep to rest. It proved to be the house of a knight, and the knight's wife came to the door and said: —

"What do you want, my poor girl?"

The girl was so tired that she could not think of anything that she wanted but rest, and she said: —

"Will you let me sleep in your stable?"

"Willingly," said the lady, "but first come into the kitchen to warm you at the fire and to eat some supper."

While she sat in the kitchen, everybody in the house came in and gazed at her, for her skin was white as snow and her lips red as rubies. After she had eaten, she had a good night's rest on the straw in the stable, although she had never before slept on anything but a soft feather bed.

In the morning she hid her rich robes and her jewels in the straw, and went into the kitchen again, and the cook said: —

"My lady told me that I might keep you as a scullion if I would. Will you stay?"

"Gratefully," answered the young girl.

"What is your name?" asked the cook.

"My father never called me by any," replied the girl.

"Then we 'll call you 'Catskin,'" said the cook.

Now the friend of the wife of the squire had taught the girl to sew and to cook and to do everything that there was to be done about a house, and she was soon a great fa-

vorite not only with the cook, but with the knight and the lady; and all would have gone well if it had not been that the knight had a son.

One evening this son went a mile away from the town to a ball. Catskin forgot that she was now only a scullion, and she said to the lady: —

"I 'd like to go to the ball too. Won't you let me follow on after your son?"

The lady was so angry that she said not one word, but she struck the girl with a ladle and broke it in two.

Catskin said not one word, but she slipped out to the darkest corner of the stable, untied her bundle, put on a handsome blue silk dress and a string of pearls around her neck, and went to the ball.

When the dancing was over, the knight's son came to her and said: —

"Fair lady, will you tell me where you live?" and she looked down on the floor and answered: —

"I live at the sign of the Broken Ladle." And while the knight's son was saying over and over to himself, "'The Broken Ladle,'

who ever heard of a place like that?" the fair lady slipped out and ran so fast that when the knight's son reached home, there was Catskin in the kitchen, paring potatoes for breakfast.

The ball was to be held for three nights, and the next night Catskin went to the lady again and said: —

"I 'd like to go to the ball too. Won't you let me follow after your son?"

The lady was so angry that she said not one word, but she struck the girl with a skimmer and broke it in two.

Catskin said not one word, but she slipped out to the darkest corner of the stable, untied her bundle, put on a handsome pink silk dress with a string of opals around her neck, and went to the ball. She danced even more gracefully than she had done the first night; and when the dancing was over, the knight's son came to her and said: —

"Fair lady, will you tell me where you live?" and she looked down on the floor and answered: —

"I live at the sign of the Broken Skimmer." And while the knight's son was say-

ing over and over to himself, "'The Broken Skimmer,' who ever heard of a place like that?" the fair lady had slipped out, and she ran so fast that when the knight's son came home, there was Catskin in the kitchen, boiling the teakettle for breakfast. The poor young man was sadly puzzled.

"It was our Catskin," said he, "and it was n't; but for all that, I 'd swear to it that it was, if she had n't worn such rich clothes instead of the skins of cats."

The third night Catskin asked again to go to the ball, and the knight's lady was so angry that she threw a basin of water over her. Catskin ran out to the barn again, and this time she put on a pale green silk and a ruby necklace. Again the knight's son asked where she lived, and now she answered: —

"I live at the sign of the Basin of Water," and again she slipped out to run home; but this time the knight's son ran as fast as she, only he kept in the shadow of the hedge, so she should not see him, and he caught up with her just as she was going into the stable.

"I 've found you now," he said, "and

you 're our own Catskin. You are the sweetest creature I ever saw, and you dance better than any one I ever danced with before. Will you marry me?"

"That could never be," said Catskin, "for I have no marriage portion."

"Your beauty is portion enough," said the knight's son; but Catskin shook her head and said: —

"Your mother would not think so. She would never consent."

"Will you marry me if she does consent?" asked the knight's son eagerly. Catskin did not answer, but somehow the knight's son seemed to be satisfied, for he said: —

"I have a trick. I know just what I will do." And while he was saying it Catskin slipped away. The next day the knight's son sent word to his mother: —

"I 'm very sick, and I must have some one to take care of me." His mother said: —

"There 's an old nurse that lives under the hill, and she shall come to take care of you;" but the knight's son shook his head. Then his mother said: —

"There 's an old nurse that lives far out

on the plain, and she shall come to take care of you." But the knight's son said: —

"No, I want Catskin to come to take care of me." Then his mother answered: —

"Catskin cannot come to take care of you; she has her work in the kitchen to do." But the knight's son said: —

"Then I shall die, and you will be sorry that you did not give me Catskin for my nurse." This is the way that Catskin came to take care of the knight's son.

Now when the knight's wife came to see her sick son, there sat Catskin in a white silk dress with diamonds around her neck.

"Who is this fine lady?" asked the mother. And the knight's son said: —

"It is Catskin. She is all dressed for our wedding, and if I don't have her, I shall die."

"Well, I never!" said the knight's wife, and she ran downstairs to call her husband. He gave one look, and said: —

"I never saw so handsome a lady in all the days of my life." The knight's wife did not look very much pleased at this; but the knight went on to ask Catskin who she was and whence she came, and why she had wan-

dered away from her home. Then he gave her a very big, fatherly kiss, and he said: —

"I 'll kiss you now because you're going to be my daughter to-morrow."

And sure enough, the very next day the knight's son was well again, and there was the greatest wedding that there ever was in all that part of the country, for no one had ever seen so many carriages or so many richly dressed guests, and all the bells in town rang of their own accord because they were so glad.

Now Catskin's mother and sister, whom she had never seen, were dead, and the old squire was left very lonely. He thought and he thought, and at last he reasoned: —

"She 'll never forgive me if I tell her that I am her father; but I want to see her so much that I will even dress myself as a beggar and go to her house to get a glimpse of her." So he put on ragged clothes and took a staff in his hand, and knocked at the door of Catskin's house, and he said: —

"Noble lady, I'm forced to ask for charity, for I 'm a poor man."

"What is your name?" she asked; and he was so overcome with the joy of seeing her

that he forgot all about the name that he had made up and gave her his own real name. Catskin could n't help laughing just for a moment, but then she fell on her knees, all dressed in silks and diamonds as she was, and cried: —

"I 'm your own daughter! Come in and you shall have the very best that there is in the house, and if you will, you shall stay with me as long as you live." Then the squire tossed off his old rags, and stood up before her in his own fine clothes, with a gold chain around his neck and a ring on his finger, and he said: —

"I have gold and silver enough, and if you 'll only forgive me, I 'll grant you ten thousand pounds for a wedding portion; and now I want to see your husband." When the knight's son came in, the squire was so pleased with him that he turned to his daughter, and whispered: —

"Now I 'm glad that you were a girl, for a boy would never have brought me so fine a new son as this." He went home to sell his land, and then he came back to his daughter and the knight's son, and they all lived together in happiness forever after.

ROBIN HOOD RESCUES THE LADY'S THREE SONS

UP and down the forest ranged bold Robin Hood, and at last he came to the darkest part of it all. There was a great pool of brown water, and the ground about it quaked and trembled if one walked too near the edge. There were lonely hemlock-trees with many a withered branch, and from the hemlocks hung down a long, pale moss that moved in the twilight breeze like slender hands always clutching at something that they could not reach. All by itself on the edge of the brown pool was a gray rock, and on the rock was a fair woman weeping. She was dressed in black, and her golden hair floated over her sable garments and looked as if a bit of sunshine had dropped down into the gloomy place. A loon flew near and gave an eerie call to its mate. The other loon came. It circled around with an unearthly cry, and then they settled on a tuft of dead rushes near the further shore, and

looked at the woman on the rock. Robin stood under a tree, and he, too, looked at the woman on the rock.

"Fair lady, why do you weep?" said he. "Has any one done you a wrong? Have you been robbed of gold or fee?"

"Never would I weep for gold or for fee," said the lady on the rock. "I weep for my own three sons, for they are all to die on the gallows-tree to-morrow morning."

"And what have they done?" asked Robin. "Have they robbed a church, or slain a parish priest, or stolen a maiden away from her home against her will?"

"No, no," said the lady on the rock, "no church have they robbed, no parish priest have they slain, and no maiden have they taken from her home against her will."

"Then what have they done?" cried Robin Hood, "that they should all die on the gallows-tree?"

"Oh, oh," sobbed the lady on the rock more bitterly than ever, "they 've done worse than that, for they 've shot the King's own fallow deer, and it is for this that they are to die on the gallows-tree."

"This is no business for a woman," said Robin cheerfully. "Go you to your own house and look well out of the upper window, and it may be that something will come to pass to-morrow in the morning."

So the lady made her way to her own house, and Robin strolled along singing: —

"And I 'll go to Nottingham,
For the lady fair
With the golden hair;
To her sons all three
A hangman I 'll be,
And I 'll go to Nottingham."

In the morning Robin set out for Nottingham, and on the road he met a ragged old man in a cloak that was patched with black and blue and yellow and red; and where it was not patched, the wind sang merrily through the holes.

"Hey day, old man," called Robin, "how goes it in Nottingham?" The old man bent almost to the ground to do honor to the fine gentleman in the handsome coat of green, with the feather in his hat, and answered: —

"Sadly, kind sir, sadly. There be three sons of a poor widow who are to hang on

the gallows-tree this day for shooting the King's fallow deer, and there is no one in Nottingham who does not weep and wail for the death of them."

"And I 'll go to Nottingham,
And I 'll go to Nottingham,"

hummed Robin. Then he said to the ragged old man: —

"That 's a fine cloak you have, and when the sun shines on it, it looks as bright as the flowers in a meadow. Will you exchange with me?"

"I thought you were a kindly gentleman," said the old man, "and that you would not laugh a poor old beggar to scorn. It 's no good luck you 'll win to-day, sir."

"Let the ring of the silver speak for me," said Robin, laughing, and he tossed the old man forty silver shillings.

"That 's to bind the bargain," declared Robin. "And here 's the pay for the cloak and all the rest of your clothes," and he gave him a silken purse with twenty pieces of broad red gold.

So while Robin whistled and sang, and

the old man's fingers trembled with delight at getting so fine a cloak and so many pieces of gold, the beggar put on the handsome green clothes, and Robin donned the beggar's cloak that the wind whistled through except where it was patched, and the old man's hose that were mended with bits of cloth from knee to ankle, and the old man's shoes that had pieces of leather of all colors sewed on wherever there had been a hole, and slung the old man's begging-bag over his shoulder.

"Now stand up on this stone," said Robin, and he whirled him round and round. "Indeed, you make a lively old man. Let's see how fast you can run; and don't you be seen in Nottingham town before the clock on the tower strikes four."

The old man ran as fast as ever he could run, and with the greatest good will, for he was sure that the crazy fellow who had given him a good green cloak for his ragged one would repent of his bargain and call for his own again.

Robin strode along the highway singing: —

"And I'll go to Nottingham,
To Nottingham, to Nottingham,"

but suddenly he stopped and began to lean on his stick and to creep slowly on his way.

"In faith," said he, "unless I have the eyes of the old man as well as his cloak, that's the proud Sheriff of Nottingham coming along the road." So Robin bowed himself humbly before the Sheriff, and said: —

"Could you not do a favor to an old beggar man this fine morning?" But the Sheriff answered: —

"Get out of the road, old man. I'm going to find a hangman for three rogues that are to die this day on the gallows-tree for killing the King's fallow deer."

"And what'll you give to him that'll be your hangman?" asked the old beggar man.

"The three good suits of clothes that the rogues wear, and thirteen silver pence besides," answered the Sheriff.

"I'm the one that needs a suit of good clothes," said the old man, "as you well may see, and if you will give them to me, I'll hang everybody that's to be hanged in Nottingham to-day." Then the old man and the

Sheriff went up the hill to the gallows-tree, and the three young men were brought out to be hanged, and the lady who had wept on the rock by the lonely pool was looking out of the upper window and sobbing bitterly.

"Have you sent for the priest to come and shrive them, and have you rung the passing bell for the good of their souls?" asked Robin. And the proud Sheriff answered:—

"Never a priest shall come to shrive them by my sending for him, and never a sound of a passing bell shall they get from me."

"Then I must even ring the bell myself," said Robin, "but I'll have three blasts on my good bugle-horn instead;" and before the Sheriff could turn about three times, Robin had blown on his bugle-horn, and more than five-score of his good brave men had come marching up the hill.

"'T were a shame to waste so fine a gallows-tree," declared Robin thoughtfully. "We might just hang the worst man in the company so as to get the good of it." He looked straight at the Sheriff, and the Sheriff was badly frightened; but Robin laughed and let him go, and sent the three young

men home to their mother, who was weeping tears of joy out of the window.

"Farewell," cried Robin, "I never stay out of doors when it rains;" and so Robin and his five-score men marched away singing merrily:—

"Robin went to Nottingham,
To Nottingham, to Nottingham;
Robin went to Nottingham
One merry day in the morning."

KING JOHN AND THE ABBOT

IT was a merry time in the house of the Abbot of Canterbury. Forty guests sat at his table, and forty serving-men there were, every one of them in velvet coat, and heavy gold chain that swung before him, and would have been sadly in his way as he hurried from kitchen to hall, if it had not been made of gold. The finest of linen covered the gilded table, and on it were silver plates and golden goblets, and in every goblet was set a precious stone that flashed and blazed in the light of the wax candles. When the guests tried to count it, sometimes they thought it was two, and sometimes they thought it was three, and sometimes they could not count it at all. Once the candles had been tall and stately, but now they were almost ready to sputter in their sockets; but still the Abbot shouted: —

"Fill up the tankards! Bring on the wine! You knave, you brought the wine from the north side of the cellar."

"Yes, master; I mean, no, master," stammered the servant, looking for something to put between him and the Abbot. The guests laughed tipsily, and then laughed again, as the silver dish that the Abbot threw at the man failed to touch him. Just then the trampling of the feet of many horses was heard. A horn was blown, and a shout came: —

"In the name of King John, open the door!"

"To the messenger of the King, I will even open the door myself," said the Abbot, as he rather clumsily undid the fastening.

There was a long array of men on horseback. The foremost dismounted, doffed his plumed hat, bowed low before the Abbot, and said: —

"Sir Abbot, the King bids you come to him and spare no speed." Then he sprang upon his horse, blew his horn again, and in a moment the whole company was gone.

Straightway the Abbot made himself ready to go to the King. He donned his finest clothes, all of silk and satin and cloth of gold; he put rings on his fingers, and he wore a

heavy gold chain with a red stone in every link.

"When the King would show honor to a man," said he, "even a simple abbot should try humbly to wear his best."

The guests all shouted their approval and tried to find room on his fingers for more rings, and one bent down to the ground and began to polish with the corner of his mantle one of the Abbot's shining spurs. There was fear of robbers in the great forest, so over all this gorgeousness the Abbot slipped the plain black cloak of a monk, and started merrily on his way.

He came to the palace, and there on the dais at the end of the hall sat the King. He was on a golden throne, and a purple canopy was over him, and on his head was a golden crown. The hall was full of his liegemen, but when the Abbot appeared, they all parted to the right and to the left, and there was a wide passageway from the door to the King's throne.

The Abbot dropped off his monkish cloak, and walked with calm dignity up the long aisle. His silks and satins shone, and his

jewels sparkled. He made his humble salutation to the King, and stood waiting to hear what new honor was to be conferred upon him. The King did not grant even a nod in return for his obeisance, but said abruptly: —

"So you keep one hundred men in gold chains and velvet, do you?"

The Abbot could hardly answer, but managed to stammer: —

"No, your Majesty, I have only a score, and mayhap a trifle of one or two more on the feast-days of the church."

"They 're all feast-days with you," muttered the King. "You keep a better house than I do, and you have more men about you, and you must be a traitor; and a traitor ought to be beheaded, as you shall be within three hours."

Then the Abbot pleaded for his life; he said that the money that he spent was all his own, but still the King shook his head. The Abbot might have offered to give his money to the King, and then it would all have been right, but he was too dazed even to think of such a thing.

Just then the Court Fool began to jingle

his bells, and sang so softly that only the King could hear him: —

"Hey ho, hey ho,
There was once a king
Would have let him go."

"*You* shall go!" thundered the King, "and you shall be beheaded, too, — and then I suppose all the people will say that Richard would not have done so. A plague on them!" he muttered; and he turned to the Abbot, who knelt trembling, all the gleam gone from his satin and the glitter from his jewels.

"There never was a king so pestered as I, and so merciful. Now do you stand up there and answer me three questions. First, tell me to a penny how much I am worth; then tell me how long it would take me to ride around the world; and, third, tell me what I am thinking about; and I am so kind-hearted that I 'll forgive you all your crimes and let you go."

"Your Majesty's questions are so hard, and my wit is so shallow," pleaded the poor Abbot. "Give me three weeks, I pray you, and it may be that I can answer you."

"Never was king so merciful as I," said the

sovereign. "They ought to call me 'Good King John,' for I do whatever any one asks me; and I won't cut off your head or even take your lands and your rent for three long weeks. I won't then, I declare I won't, if you answer my questions."

The Abbot bowed humbly and mounted his horse, and went in search of a wise man to save his head and his lands. He went to the learned doctors of Cambridge and Oxford. They looked very, very sage, and they wrinkled their foreheads, and they said there ought to be a way out of it, and that when the right stars were in the ascendant, they were almost sure that it might be found.

"And when will that be?" cried the Abbot.

Then they drew some mysterious circles and signs, and answered: —

"The stars will be favorable in just three weeks and three days and three hours."

"Then I shall be dead," moaned the Abbot.

"But your question will be answered," said the learned doctors, "and what more do you want? Isn't that what you came here for?"

The Abbot made no reply, and rode sor-

rowfully away. His foot hung out of his stirrup, and his hands hung down, and his head hung down, for if the learned doctors could not help him, no one could; and if his head was to be cut off so soon, what was the use of holding it up?

Now the Abbot's servants were at home, making ready for a great feast to celebrate the Abbot's visit to the King,—all but one, a shepherd, who was driving the sheep of his master into the fold, as the Abbot came along the road in the twilight.

"Welcome, welcome, Sir Abbot," he called. "What is the news from King John?" and the poor Abbot was so helpless and so sad that he slipped down from his horse, and sat there on a stone and told the shepherd all about it. The sheep bleated to go into the fold, but still the Abbot talked. "And I've not quite three days," he said, "for I've wasted two weeks and four days and five hours in going to the wise men at the universities — a plague on them with their circles and their stars and their ascendants! I wish it was their heads, every one of them!"

But the shepherd only laughed and said: —

"Doctors don't know everything. Sometimes a wise man is a fool, and sometimes a fool is a wise man. These are the Abbot's sheep, and I dare not leave them, for if he does not lose his head, I 'm afraid he might make me lose mine; but if you will put on my shepherd's frock, and watch the sheep, I 'll put on your satin and your gold, and take your horse and gallop up to London town to see the King and answer his questions."

"He 'll know it is n't I," said the Abbot hopelessly.

"Never will he," replied the shepherd cheerily, "for every one says we look just alike to a hair."

Even the despondent Abbot winced a little at this, but he meekly took off his satin and his rings and his chains, and put on the shepherd's frock and took the shepherd's crook.

So the shepherd donned all the gorgeous attire and galloped up to London town to see the King.

"Welcome, Sir Abbot," said the King. "It is well that you are here on the day. Many a king would be hard on you, but I

give you nothing to do but to answer three little simple questions. Now tell me first how much I am worth."

"That is easy," said the shepherd. "You are worth more than any other man in the world. Our Saviour Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver, and you cannot be worth more than twenty-nine." The King smiled.

"I thought I was worth more," said he, "but let that pass;" and the Court Fool sang softly: —

"The king is worth but a bit of brass,
Heigh ho and a heigh ho;
He says that he will let it pass,
Heigh ho, sing heigh ho."

The King was in a good-natured mood, so he only laughed, and of course all the courtiers laughed too; and he asked: —

"Now tell me how long it will take me to ride round the world."

"That is easier," replied the shepherd. "There is the carriage at the window. You 've only to rise with the sun and ride with him, and in twenty-four hours you will have been round the world."

"Any fool could tell that," grumbled

the King, a little piqued; and the jester hummed: —

"Any fool could tell him so,
Tell him so, tell him so;
But he 's a fool that wants to know,
Tell him so, tell him so."

The King frowned at the shepherd and said: —

"Since you are so wise, this ought to be easy too. Tell me what I 'm thinking."

"And that is the easiest of all," answered the shepherd, "for I can tell it right out of my own head without any numbers at all. Your Majesty is thinking that I 'm the Abbot of Canterbury," — and then he dropped on one knee before the King and said, — "but I 'm only his poor shepherd, and I 've come to beg your mercy for us both;" and at this the poor shepherd fell on both knees and did not smile any more, for after all it is perilous business to jest with a king, and he was not sure that two heads would not go off instead of one. But the King threw back his own head and laughed loud and long.

"By the mass," he shouted, "I 'll make *you* an abbot instead of that dunce!"

But the shepherd shook his head: —

"Alas, my King, an abbot must be learned; he must read and write, and I can do neither."

"Then I 'll give you four nobles a week," said the King, "and if you should chance to see that Abbot, tell him that good King John sends him a pardon."

"That will I do, most gracious King," responded the shepherd, and he backed out of the royal presence as well as he could, for he was not used to wearing spurs, and although they were made of gold, they caught in everything in his way.

FORESTER ETIN

"WHAT is that bird-song that I hear far away in the forest?" said Lady Margaret to her bower-maiden; and the bower-maiden answered: —

"Never did I hear such a bird-note before. O my lady, do not go to the forest," she pleaded, for Lady Margaret half rose from her seat, and the pearls that she was sewing to her silken mantle fell to the floor and rolled about the room. One of them rolled out of the open door, and it did not stop, but rolled on and on, and ever it went toward the forest.

"Do you see the pearl?" asked Lady Margaret. "It is rolling toward Elmond Wood. Look, it is waiting for me. Now it goes on. We will go, the pearl and I, and we will listen to all the birds that sing on all the trees, and by and by we shall surely find the bird that sings the wonderful new song."

"Oh, do not go, my lady," said the bower-maiden. "The wise woman in the little house by the hazel said there was no good to be got by following strange guides."

"Call you my own pearl a strange guide, you foolish maiden?" queried Lady Margaret, with a smile.

"I do not know," answered the bower-maiden meekly, "but the wise woman once said that sometimes one's own were strange to one. The bird is not one of our own birds, my lady; it is not the mavis nor the laverock, and I am afraid. Do not go."

"Silly little maiden," laughed Lady Margaret. "I am going to Elmond Wood — no, you shall not go with me, because you were afraid of my pretty bird-song; but I will come again before the sun is behind the hill where the pine-trees stand, and I will bring you a handful of brown nuts, and I will tell you where my pretty bird lives, foolish child as you are." And Lady Margaret dropped her needle and her silken mantle, and kissed lightly the little bower-maiden; and then she sped away out of the open door, and followed the pearl down the winding path, along the lane, over the stepping-stones in the brook, up the little hill, and into Elmond Wood.

The shade was green, and there was long,

pale moss on the trees, and here and there the sun glinted down between the branches, and the brown water of the little pools in the forest was touched with gold. The pathway was all of bright green moss, and she wandered along happily, sometimes singing little snatches of old songs, and sometimes she stood with her lily-white hand behind her rosy ear, listening for the song of the wonderful bird-note; and whenever she heard it, it seemed to come from still farther away in the forest.

"I thought the forest was full of the nut bushes," said Lady Margaret to herself, "but any way, I will not go back without my handful of nuts, or my silly little maiden will laugh at me."

But there was no nut bush to be seen, and before she had found one, the rays of the sun that made their way into the forest were pale and dim, and the gold had faded from the brown water.

"Here is my nut bush at last!" cried Lady Margaret, and she broke off a tiny branch. But hark! What was that? for she heard the bird-song, and it came out of the bush. No,

it was not a bird-note, it was a human voice, and it said gently: —

"And do you pick the nuts without asking leave of the forester, Lady Margaret?"

"My father is earl of all the land," said Lady Margaret. "May I not pick a nut in my father's woods without asking any forester?"

"This is not the earl's nut bush, Lady Margaret; it is my own. A wise woman gave it me, but I 'll gladly give it to you, my love, if you 'll only bide in the forest here with me."

There was something of the bird-note in the pleading voice; and when the nut bush suddenly sank into the ground and disappeared, and he stood before her, a comely youth wearing the green of the forester, she said to herself: —

"He is taller and straighter than the men of my father's court; his eyes are clearer and brighter, and if he was in the great hall of the castle, he would be the best man of them all."

"I know I 'm only your father's forester, Lady Margaret," said he, with the same bird-

note in his voice, "but if you 'll be my own sweetheart and bide with me in the forest, I 'll build you a fairer bower than ever you saw."

Lady Margaret looked upon him again, and again she said to herself: —

"His eyes are true, and his voice is true, and if he was in the great hall of the castle, he would be the best man of them all."

And this is why the little bower-maiden wept for her lost lady until her pretty eyes were all red with the salt tears; and this is why the pearls still lay on the floor of the bower, and why the door of the bower was never closed by day or by night, for the maiden liked to fancy that her lady was coming in at any moment and would say to her: —

"Little maiden, why do you not pick up the pearls that lie all about the floor?"

And so it was that Lady Margaret became the sweetheart of Forester Etin. Far in the depths of the forest he built the beautiful bower. It was made of boughs on which the green leaves never withered, and over it ran many vines, and all about it were bright

flowers whose colors never faded. Around it Forester Etin built a high stone wall to keep his lady safe from any harm; and beside the wall was a thorn-tree, and whenever anything came near that might hurt her, the thorn-tree would stoop down and catch it up on its sharp thorns.

Twelve long, happy years they lived together, Forester Etin and his dear Lady Margaret, in the beautiful bower among the flowers that never faded, and seven fair sons she bore under the green leaves that never withered. On the day when the eldest son was just ten years old, Forester Etin said: —

"My bonny lad is almost a man now, and he shall go to the hunting with me this day."

So Forester Etin and his eldest son set out to wander through the gay greenwood. All around them was merry and glad. The mavis was singing overhead; the trees were murmuring quietly together, and all among the grass and the flowers were soft, sweet little voices, so gentle that the boy could not always hear them, but he was so happy that he knew they were there. All at once he heard a music that he had never heard before.

"What is it, my father?" he asked, "the strange, new music? I never heard a bird like that."

Then the father said that it was a church bell, and somehow the sound of it made the boy think of his mother, and he said: —

"Shall you be angry, father, if I ask you something?" and Forester Etin smiled and answered: —

"Say on, say on, my bonny boy. You may always ask your own father what you will," and the boy said: —

"What makes my mother's cheeks so wet, and why does she sometimes sob so bitterly when you are away at the hunting?"

Then the father put his arm about the boy, and they sat under an oak-tree, and the sun glinted down through the branches and made the water in the little brown pools all golden; and the father spoke very sadly: —

"No wonder is it that she pines and grieves, for it is twelve long years and more since she has seen either kith or kin. She was the daughter of an earl, a lady of high degree. She might have wedded the first in all the land, but I loved her so with all my

heart that she could not help loving me. I was only her father's forester, but for twelve long years she has abode with me in the forest."

"I 'm sorry," said the little boy. "I 'll shoot the laverock in the lift and the bunting on the tree, and I 'll carry them home to my mother, and I 'll say, 'Mother, do not grieve any more,' and then perhaps she will be merrier."

But Lady Margaret was no merrier, and one day Forester Etin took his little son aside and whispered: —

"I 'm going far away into the greenwood, my eldest son; and if I do not come back when the sun shines no more through the thorn-tree, then I shall not come again, and you must go to your mother and say, 'Mother, let us all go away from the forest, and let us seek your own father in the land where one hears the church bells ring.'" Then Forester Etin took his bow and arrows and went far away into the greenwood; but every few steps he stopped, and looked back to see his wife's face once more before she should go to the land where the church bells ring.

All day long the little boy stayed under the thorn-tree outside the high stone wall and watched for his father. When the sun no longer shone through the thorns, he went in to his mother and said: —

"Mother, should you be angry with me if I asked you something?" and his mother smiled and answered: —

"Say on, say on, my bonny boy. You may always ask your own mother what you will," and the boy pleaded: —

"You 're grieving, mother, and your cheeks are wet with tears, and when you kiss me at night they drop on my face and wake me. Won't you tell me why you grieve?"

Then the mother answered: —

"It is because I have seven fair sons and not one of them has ever had christening, for I have stayed away from my father, the earl of all the land, twelve long years for the love of Forester Etin."

"Could you not go back to the earl, and take my father and me and my six brothers?"

"Alas, no, for your father is an outlaw, and if he should go to the castle of the earl

without a pardon, he would be hanged on the gallows-tree."

"Would you go if my father told you to go?" asked the boy; and then he repeated what his father had said. His mother wept more bitterly than ever, and she answered:—

"If your father has left us, then we must go."

So in the morning the eldest son took his mother by the hand, and they two and the six little brothers went to find the castle of the earl. It was a long way and they were weary, and the little brothers were afraid, for they had never before been so far away from the bower where the flowers never faded. The rough stones cut their feet, and the sharp briers scratched their little fingers, and when they were out of the cool shade of the forest, the hot sun burned their cheeks. At last the mother stopped and pointed to a gray cloud on a hill and said:—

"That is my father's castle;" and when they had come nearer, she pointed to a heavy iron gate set in a high stone wall, and said:—

"That is the gate of my father's castle. Stop by the little brook and bathe the sun-

burn from your cheeks and the touch of the briers from your fingers and the bruises of the rough stones from your feet, and then, my own eldest son, we will wait here beside the little brook, and you must go alone to the earl and tell him that you are the son of his own daughter Margaret."

"But there is a man at the gate, my mother, and will he let me in?"

"He 'll let you in for a fee, my son. No money have I, but I have three jewel rings. Give the ruby to the proud porter, and he will let you through the gate. Then give the emerald to the butler boy, and he will take you to the door of the hall; but save the diamond to give to the minstrel that 's harping in the hall, for he is the one that can turn the hearts of the earl and all his men to joy or woe as he will."

So the little boy did as his mother bade him, and before long he was within the door of the hall, and far up at the other end sat the earl on the high seat. The boy looked timidly at the minstrel, for he thought: —

"To turn one's heart to joy or to woe, that is greatest of all." But when he shyly held

out the ring with its flashing diamond, the minstrel looked upon him kindly and shook his head and said: —

"Something tells me that my song may be for love and not for reward." Then he began to play on his harp, and somehow every note gave the boy new courage. He was no longer afraid, but he stood erect and walked up the hall till he came before the earl. Then he fell on one knee and was silent. The earl looked at him and turned pale. Then he put his hand over his eyes and moaned: —

"Go away, child, or my heart will break, for you are so like to my own dear Margaret;" but the boy only bowed lower and kissed the hand of the earl and said: —

"But your own dear Margaret stands at your castle gate, and with her are my six little brothers, for I am her oldest son."

Then the earl stalked down the hall and called out angrily: —

"Where are my porters that I pay good silver and good gold? How dare they leave Lady Margaret outside my castle gate?"

Then the little eldest son ran so joyfully to

tell his mother that he was beside her before the proud porter could take his eyes from the ruby ring long enough to see who it was that ran past him.

And so Lady Margaret was with her father again; but when it was time for the feast, a great longing to see Forester Etin came over her, and she said: —

"My heart aches, father, to see my own Etin. No bit can I eat and no drop can I drink till he is by my side."

Then the earl called out angrily: —

"Where are all the bold rangers that I pay good silver and good gold? Why do they not search the woods and bring Forester Etin home to us?" But the little boy shook his head and said: —

"He cannot come without a free pardon, or he would be hanged on the gallows-tree."

Then the earl declared: —

"Here is a pardon all sealed with my own hand. Let every ranger go to the forest and search till he finds the husband of Lady Margaret."

So the rangers searched the forest, and when they found Forester Etin, he lay on

the ground under the thorn-tree, and he was groaning and tearing his yellow hair.

"Take me to hang on the gallows-tree, if you will," he said. "My lady's gone, and my life is nothing to me."

"But it is your lady that has sent for you," they answered, "and here's a free pardon for you from the earl of all the land."

And so it came to pass that they all sat at the feast together and when the earl asked the little oldest son what gift he would have for himself, the little boy remembered what his mother had said and answered: —

"Will you and my mother and my father take me and my six brothers to the holy church and let us get our christening? for it's only once that I have even heard the sound of a church bell."

"That's not so hard a boon, my boy, and this very day you shall go to the holy church and get your christening, and you shall all live here in the castle with me, and when I die, the brave Forester Etin shall rule the land for the love that he has borne to my dear Lady Margaret these twelve long years and more."

When Lady Margaret went into her own bower again, there was the little bower-maiden, and Lady Margaret smiled and asked: —

"Little maiden, why do you not pick up the pearls that lie all about the floor?" and the bower-maiden smiled in answer and said: —

"But, Lady Margaret, where is the handful of nuts that you promised to bring me from Elmond Wood?"

FALSE FOODRAGE

AND now which one of us shall go forth to kill the king?" asked the first baron.

"There 's not one in the land that can cut him down in a fair fight," said the second baron.

"Why need it be a 'fair fight'?" said the third baron, who was called False Foodrage.

"Would you fight a man unfairly?" demanded the first.

"There 's no need of throwing away our own lives," said the second.

"Fair or unfair, we must kill him," declared False Foodrage.

"Then let us draw lots," said the first.

"But the lot might fall upon him who is least able to do the deed," said the second.

"Worthless men that you are," cried False Foodrage, "you say 'Yes' and you say 'No,' and you have n't either of you the courage of a rabbit! Stop your drawing of lots; that is the plan of a coward. Stay by your firesides, and I will take my own sharp knife and go forth alone to kill the king."

So False Foodrage took his sharp knife and went forth to kill the king. It was deep in the night, and all were asleep save the porter in his lodge, who kept watch and ward over the safety of the king. In the rear of the lodge was a little window, and over the window was a strong grapevine, and False Foodrage climbed up by the vine and clung to the sill of the window.

"What was that?" asked the porter. "It was the wind in the trees," he said to himself.

"What was that?" asked the porter again. "It was the rain falling on the thatch of the roof," he said to himself.

"What was that?" asked the porter the third time. "It was the hail falling on the pebbles," he said. And all the time it was the Vine rustling her leaves and trying her best to make him understand that danger was near; but the porter was so sure that all was well that he did not even turn his head. Then False Foodrage climbed through the window and crept up softly behind the porter and thrust his sharp knife into the porter's heart.

High up on a wooden pin beside the door were four and twenty silver keys, and each one of them unlocked a door of the castle. So False Foodrage took down the bunch of keys and went through the gate and up the winding way to the castle. Then he took the largest silver key and unlocked the great door of the castle; and when he had gone through that door, he locked it behind him and went on to the next; and so he opened door after door until he came to the last one of all, and this was the door of the room in which the king slept.

"Who 's there?" cried the king. "Why are you here, False Foodrage?"

"You 'll know soon enough why I am here!" cried the traitor, and before the king could reach for his sword, False Foodrage had stabbed him to the heart. Then the queen fell upon her knees and pleaded: —

"Spare my life, False Foodrage! Never did I injure you; why should you harm me? Spare me for the sake of the babe that is to come to me!"

"If your babe shall be a girl," said False Foodrage, "I care naught for her; she may

live for all me. But if the babe shall be a lad, then, though his mother was a queen and his father a king, and though he be but of tender age, he shall hang high, high on the gallows-tree."

So False Foodrage let the queen live, but he set four and twenty valiant knights to watch her door.

"What shall I do?" said the queen to herself, "and how shall I get free?" She thought and she thought, and at last she said to one of the knights: —

"You are mayhap thirsty and weary, Sir Carlton?" and Sir Carlton replied: —

"Yes, truly, my lady. The days are long and the nights are long, and we are weary and thirsty."

"Naught have I against you, Sir Carlton, and naught have I against the other three and twenty valiant knights that keep guard at the door of my bower, for you do but what you are forced to do. Great store have I of nut brown ale, and great store have I of ruby wine, and I would willingly share it with you and your comrades."

The knight thanked the queen most heart-

ily, and she sent for three great casks of ale and three great tuns of wine. Gladly the four and twenty knights drank of the ale and of the wine, and it was not long before the whole four and twenty lay on the floor outside the queen's bower, every one of them in a drunken slumber. Then the queen climbed softly through the window and set out to go over the land to find some one who would shelter her. She asked at the great door of the hall, but the knight whispered: —

"I dare not let you in, my lady, for False Foodrage would fall upon me and kill my wife and child and burn my castle." She asked at the small door of the cottage, and the goodman said: —

"I dare not let you in, my lady, for False Foodrage would take our home from us and send us out to wander all over the wide world."

So the queen went from bower to hall and from hall to cottage, and no one would take her in. At last she came to the Valley of the Poisonous Things.

"No one will follow me here," said she, and went on through the valley. All the

poisonous leaves bent to one side so as not to harm her, and all the things that had life to creep crept softly away from her path. Beyond the valley was a great stable, and toward the stable went the queen. The fierce dogs that had been left to guard it stood one side and whined joyfully, and when she went into the stable, they lay close by the door and kept all harm away from her. The cattle that were in the stable said to one another: —

"It is the wife of our king who has come to us when men feared to care for her. Let us be quiet lest we trouble her." So all that long night no sound was heard but the soft breathing of the cattle and the sleepy mutterings of the dogs outside the door, warning all that would do harm to keep far away from the queen, for when men had cast her out, the dogs and the cattle would guard her and care for her.

Now when the four and twenty knights awoke from their four and twenty bad dreams, they were much afraid, for the queen was gone, and they feared that False Foodrage would hang them on the gallows-tree.

"What shall we do?" said they, "for it will soon be noonday, and False Foodrage will come to see that the queen is safe, and if she is not here, we shall every one of us be hanged."

"We will draw lots," said one, "and he who draws the shortest stick shall go forth over the wide world to seek the queen and bring her back to her bower, to save the four and twenty knights from a death on the gallows-tree."

They drew lots, and the shortest stick came to one who was known as Wise William; so Wise William set forth to go over the wide world to seek the queen.

He went to the hall, and the lord of the hall said: "No, I dared not let her in."

He went to the cottage, and the goodman said: "No, I dared not let her in." Then he traced her steps down the Miry Way and through the Brier Lot, for caught in the briers were shining bits of the cloth of gold of her gown. Then he went through the Valley of the Poisonous Things, but nothing harmed him any more than it had harmed the queen, and before long he came to the

great stable on the hillside. The savage dogs stood before the stable door, but there was a low, soft murmur down in their throats, for they were saying to one another: —

"It is the friend of her whom we guard." So they ran forward to meet him and wagged their tails and pressed their great heads up into his hand, and would willingly have let him enter the stable, but Wise William stopped. The cattle lowed gently, but still he did not go in.

"The poor lady is alone," said he. "It is not fitting that a belted knight should break in upon her refuge. I will go for my wife, my own faithful Alice, and she shall go in and be bower-maiden to the queen."

So he went for his wife, and she opened the door and went in to the queen, who was in the stable with the cattle. But behold, she was not alone, for with her was a fair young babe.

"What a bonny young son you have, my lady," said faithful Alice. "But why do you weep? She who has a goodly child like this noble boy should never let a salt tear fall from her eyes."

"O faithful Alice!" cried the queen, "it's a bonny boy, but would it were a maid-child, for False Foodrage has sworn that if my babe be a girl, he cares naught for it; but if it be a boy, he will hang him, for all his tender age, high, high on the gallows-tree." And again the queen wept, and faithful Alice wept with her. At last the queen noticed that faithful Alice too had a babe.

"That's a bonny young daughter you've got," said she, "and now a thought comes to me. Give me your daughter and I will give you my son, and then I'll go back to the castle, and my babe will be spared, and the lives of the four and twenty valiant knights will be saved."

"I'd gladly take your son and rear him as my own," answered faithful Alice, "but I cannot give up my bonny girl."

"But your own Wise William is one of the four and twenty knights," said the queen, "and he, too, will be hanged on the gallows-tree if I do not go back with a babe in my arms. It is not long to the noon hour, when False Foodrage comes to look into my window to see that all is well. Give me your

daughter and I will go swiftly back with her to my own bower. Then will Wise William and the other three and twenty knights be saved, and you shall teach my boy, my gay goshawk, to back the steed, to shoot the arrow, and to wield the sword; and I will teach the maiden, your turtle dove, to read and to write and to embroider. And when we meet, we 'll greet each other and I will say, 'Dame, how goes the gay goshawk?' and you will say, 'Madam, how fares it with the turtle dove?' But choose you quickly, for the noon hour is at hand."

"It must needs be," said faithful Alice; "so take you my turtle dove and I will take your gay goshawk." Then she covered her eyes and went away weeping. But the queen went out with cheerful face, for her child was saved, and she and Wise William made their way quickly to the castle; and when the noon hour came and False Foodrage looked in at the window, he said: —

"So you have a fair babe, madam;" and the queen rejoined: —

"It is a bonny girl, False Foodrage. Remember your promise."

"Had it been a boy, he should have hanged high on the gallows-tree, but you may do as you will with a maid-child. See you to it that you care for her well; I may take her for a wife some day," and he went away from the bower, and the queen thought of the gay goshawk and was happy.

Now when eighteen years had passed away, Wise William said to himself: —

"The time is come. To-day or never shall it be," and he asked the gay goshawk to go a-hunting with him.

Before long they left the forest, and there before them on a sunny hillside stood a lordly castle, with towers and battlements and a wall and a wide, wide moat.

"Do you see the castle?" asked Wise William. "If every one had his own, you would be its heir."

"How could that be?" asked the youth. "That belongs to False Foodrage, and glad am I that he's no kin to me."

"No kin is he to you, you say the truth; and yet the castle is your own, for he killed your father before you were born, and there's none in the whole country that would say

word of blame if you should slay him who murdered your father and stole his lands and who keeps your mother a prisoner in his castle tower."

"Are you dreaming? Never heard I such a tale as this."

"'T is o'ertrue for all that, my boy," said Wise William, "for your father was king of all the country, and your mother is our lawful queen."

Then the young man clasped his bow to his breast and swam the moat and leaped over the castle wall. None of the four and twenty doors did he stop to unlock, but he burst his way through every one of them until he came to False Foodrage.

"Help! help!" cried the traitor, but never one in all his house would come to him, for they said one to another: —

"False Foodrage is getting what he should have of right, for the prince has come to his own at last."

When the prince came to the bower, there was his own mother, and he kissed her well. With her was a maiden so beautiful that he said: —

"Fair maid, may I kiss you too, for if Wise William will but give me your hand, the bonny turtle dove shall be my queen before the sun has gone behind the mountain."

"Think you we dare refuse the maiden's hand to so fierce a young suitor as that?" said Wise William to faithful Alice. Faithful Alice smiled and the queen smiled too.

THE PROUD SHERIFF VISITS ROBIN HOOD

"MASTER ROBIN," said Little John, "I would fain go to the shooting at Nottingham."

"And are you so fond of the proud Sheriff that you cannot bide longer away from him?"

"Well could I bide away from the proud Sheriff," said Little John, "but he goes no longer to the school, and it may be that he needs a lesson now and then straight from the good greenwood."

"See to it that you get no hard lesson yourself, my Little John."

"Never fear, Master Robin. Who knows but the proud Sheriff will follow on to the good greenwood, all for the love of me, and you 'll have a new servant to shoot the king's deer, Master Robin."

"When the rivers run up hill and the trees grow with their tops under ground," said Robin. "But go, if you will. Only see that you come back to me safe."

Little John left in the forest his green

cloak and the feather from his cap, and went boldly on to the town of Nottingham, for the proud Sheriff had called out all the young men for a shooting match, and Little John was minded to be among them.

When his turn came to aim at the willow wand, he cleft it at every shot, and the proud Sheriff called out: —

"Shame on you, young men of Nottingham, that you let a stranger get the better of you!" Then asked he of Little John: —

"Tell me now truly, young man, where do you dwell? In what far land were you born and what is your name?" Then Little John bowed low and answered: —

"I was born in far-away Holderness. I bide with him who wants me most, and Greenleaf you may call my name."

"Will you dwell with me, Greenleaf?" asked the proud Sheriff. "I will give you twenty marks a year for your wages. I need a brave bowman, for there 's many an outlaw in the wood a-killing of the king's deer. You 're no outlaw yourself, mayhap, Greenleaf?"

"Think you an outlaw would dare show

himself in your own town of Nottingham?" said Little John. "No masterless man am I, and it would be better if I should get leave of him before I begin to serve you."

"Here is a good horse," said the Sheriff. "Go you to your master and say you would serve the Sheriff of Nottingham for a twelvemonth."

And so it was that Little John became the servant of the proud Sheriff who had wrought many a wrong to the dwellers in the good greenwood.

It fell upon a day that the proud Sheriff went a-hunting. No breakfast had Little John and no dinner had Little John. Then went he to the steward.

"Will you give me my dinner?" asked he.

"No bite nor sup can you have in this house till my master comes back," said the steward. "It 's my master's orders."

"Will you give me my breakfast?" said Little John to the butler. "It 's not good for a man's health to do his work fasting."

"No crumb and no drop may you have in this house till my master comes back,"

growled the butler. "It 's my master's orders," and he shut fast the buttery door.

"I 'm your master myself," said Little John, as he thrust open the door; and while the steward was hiding in the cellar under the west tower and the butler was hiding in the cellar under the east tower, Little John ate first his breakfast and then he ate his dinner.

"You 're a bold fellow," quoth the cook, and he gave him three good strokes with his ladle.

"You 're the only man in the house," said Little John. "Come out and see who is the better of us twain."

So each took a sword, and they fought for an hour or more, and neither could get the better of the other.

"If you are as good with the bow as you are with the ladle and the sword," said Little John, "there 's a brave man in the forest who will give you twenty marks a year and two suits of good green clothes."

"Mayhap I am," said the cook. "A bow is no heavier than a ladle, and to my mind it needs no more skill; but sit down a bit. You 've had your breakfast and you 've had

your dinner, and now you 'd better eat your supper while you are sure of it."

So they ate and drank, and then they broke open the treasure-room and bore away the silver dishes and the golden dishes and the cups and the spoons and three hundred and three pounds of silver, and away they went to the good greenwood.

"Welcome," cried Robin, "and welcome to the sturdy yeoman who comes with you! What is the news from Nottingham?"

"The proud Sheriff sends you his humble greeting, and he gives you his own cook and his gold and silver dishes and three hundred and three pounds of silver."

"Never came this by any good will of the Sheriff," laughed Robin.

"Master," said Little John gravely, "I give you my word that if I had asked him, he would have come himself, and if you will, I 'll bring him this very night."

So Little John set out boldly, and when he met the proud Sheriff on his way home from the hunting, he bowed low and said: —

"Master Sheriff, there 's a great sight here in the forest, — a noble hart under an oak-tree.

His color is all green, and there are seven-score of good deer with him; but his antlers are so sharp, Master Sheriff, that it needs a braver man than I to dare to shoot at him."

So the proud Sheriff rode on into the forest, and Little John ran beside him, and when they came to Robin Hood, Little John said:

"The proud Sheriff of Nottingham has come to visit you. Did I not tell you he would come if I asked him? We 'll treat you better than you treated me, Master Sheriff, for you bade your servants give me no breakfast and no dinner. We 'll give you a lordly supper, and it shall be to your taste, for your own cook shall serve you, and you shall have as fine dishes of silver and of gold as ever you had in your own house, Master Sheriff."

The Sheriff groaned when he saw his own dishes of silver and of gold, but he groaned louder after supper, for Robin said to Little John: —

"A noble guest must not serve himself, so pull off his hose and his high-cut shoes, that he may rest easily; and take off his cloak that is lined with fur, and take off his waist-

coat that is all embroidered with silk and gold — and lay him to rest on the soft, round roots of the oak-tree; and lest he roll off to the hard turf, tie him down closely."

The rain fell and the wind blew cold, while the Sheriff lay on the roots of the oak-tree; and when the morning came, the proud Sheriff was the humblest man in all merry England.

"Let me go," he pleaded. "I would not stay here another night for all the gold in the land."

"You 'll bide with me a good twelvemonth," said Robin. "It 's many a true man that you have put into a cold, wet dungeon cell, and it 's many a good man whose head you have cut off but for shooting a deer in the wild greenwood."

"Rather than bide here another night, Robin," said the proud Sheriff, "I swear that if you 'll cut off my head this day morning, I 'll never say word of blame."

"And what should I do with a man's head?" queried Robin. "I 've a good one of my own. It 's only such men as the proud Sheriff of Nottingham that need other men's heads."

"If you 'll let me go," begged the proud Sheriff, "I 'll swear you here on your sword that if ever I find any one of your men in trouble, I 'll be to him the best friend that ever he had."

"I 've no use for your head and I 've no use for your body," said Robin, "so you may go free; but you shall leave your velvet waistcoat and your cloak that is lined with fur behind you, and you shall wear home one of our green cloaks, and you shall hang it in the tower over the west chamber of your house in Nottingham town. And if ever you break your oath that you swore on my own true sword, go into the tower over the west room and put on the green cloak, for you 'll soon have another night to spend in the good greenwood."

Then Little John threw the green cloak over the shoulders of the proud Sheriff, and the Sheriff ran away so fast that the cloak stood out straight behind him; and when he came to the highway, the people that saw him said there must be a great wind, for a green tree was blowing down the road.

THE HIREMAN CHIEL

ONCE upon a time there was a baron who was a very great man. He had widespreading lands and storehouses full of gold, and castles that looked over all the country, but his greatest treasure was his only son.

"He shall know all that there is to be known," said the baron, and so he sent the boy to school.

By and by the lad came home and said:—

"The master has taught me all that he knows."

"And what is that?"

"To ride a horse as if I sat on a rock," answered the boy.

"That is good," said the baron. "Now you shall go to another school."

By and by the boy came home again and said:—

"The master has taught me all that he knows."

"And what is that?"

"To dance as if there were wings on my feet."

"That is good," declared the baron. "Now you shall go to another school."

And so it went on. The third master taught the boy to flourish a sword, the fourth to poise a lance, the fifth to wear a gold chain and a velvet mantle, the sixth to play on the lute, the seventh to sing verses to the ladies, the eighth to drop gracefully on one knee, and the ninth to make poems out of moonshine.

"Now, my son, you know all that there is to be known," said the baron. "You will have lands and woods and rents and houses and three castles and towers, but you need a wife; so go forth and roam the world over and bring me a daughter, and see that you get a lady of high degree."

"Perchance she 'll love my lands and rents more than she 'll love me," said the young knight as he set out on his horse, with his sword clashing and the little bells on the horse's mane ringing in time with the hoofbeats.

Now under the hill was a crooked little hole, and in the crooked little hole lived a crooked little man; and as the young knight

rode by, the crooked little man called out in a crooked little voice: —

> "There 's plenty of fools
> That come from nine schools;"

and then the crooked little man dropped into the crooked little hole and pulled the crooked little hole in after him, so that when the knight turned, there was no one to be seen. But in a minute or two the crooked little man put his head out again.

"I like your looks," said he, "and if you will come in here to my school, I 'll teach you more than all the other nine."

So the knight sprang from his horse and went down into the crooked little hole with his sword and his gold chain and his scarlet coat and his velvet mantle.

By and by, when he came out of the hole, he wore a ploughman's frock, and he had a stick in his hand, and he set out over the land to seek him a wife. He whistled as he walked, whether the way was rough or smooth, and whether he went through the forest or across the meadow. By and by he climbed a high, high hill, and then he went down into a glen; and while he was pushing on

amidst the briers and the brambles, he saw through a gap in the hills a gay castle far and far away.

"It has nine turrets for my nine schools," said he to himself. "And if it has another turret for the tenth, I 'll go boldly up to the gate."

Sure enough, when he had pushed on to the turn of the road and gone by the sleeping rock and the laughing brook and the singing pine, there was a tenth turret half hidden by the great banner of the castle.

Straight up to the wall went the young knight in the ploughman's frock, and he gave a thundering knock on the gate. Through the bars he could see a fair young maiden in the castle keep, and all in a moment he was sure that she was the wife for whom he was searching. The porter looked at his face and said: —

"Do you want to see the baron?" and then he looked at the ploughman's frock and said: —

"Do you want to see the greave?"

Of the greave the young knight asked: —

"Have you any work? I can plough

and sow and mow and reap, and I 'll work for seven years if I can get my wages."

" If you can hold the plough right well," said the greave, " we 'll not part for any wages."

So the young knight held the plough and planted the corn and reaped the barley and mowed the grass, and when it was time for his wages, the baron paid him nine bright shillings.

" That 's one for each of my nine schools," thought the young knight, " but the tenth is yet to come."

And so it went on for seven long years, and at last the maiden fair owned that she loved him well. She gave him a golden ring, and three times he kissed her rosy lips as they stood together under the singing pine. But when the baron found out that the hireman chiel had dared to seek his daughter's hand, he swore that before breakfast the next morning the bold man should be hanged on the gallows-tree.

" Oh, woe 's me ! " sobbed the maiden fair. But the hireman chiel only laughed and said : —

"They 'll not hang me if I am not here," and away he went whistling, past the sleeping rock and the laughing brook and the singing pine; while the maiden stood in the door of her bower and let the salt tears fall.

For a year and a day she wept, fearing sorely that she would never see her hireman chiel again. Then came a dull, gray morning, so gray that she could not see the sleeping rock, so dull that the singing pine only murmured gloomily to itself, and the laughing brook made itself into a dark, stagnant pool; and on that morning the baron came to his daughter and said: —

"There 's a grand knight come to wed you, and he has a gold chain about his neck and a ruby ring on his finger, and he wears golden spurs."

And so the bells were rung, and the maiden fair was carried to the church; but as they came to the singing pine, there stood her own hireman chiel, dressed all in his ploughman's frock. A little golden ring he held out to her, and he said: —

"Once you gave me this."

The maiden fair cried aloud for joy, and then the hireman chiel knew that she was true to him, and he said: —

"If you love me well, stretch out your hand to me."

So the maiden fair stretched out her hand to the hireman chiel in the ploughman's frock, and the baron swore a great oath and galloped away through the stagnant pool. Then the stagnant pool became a laughing brook, and the gloomy pine began to sing merry little songs, the sleeping rock awoke and sparkled in the sunshine, and, most wonderful of all, the ploughman's frock fell off, and there stood the young knight with his gold chain and his sword and his scarlet coat and his velvet mantle.

But over the hills came the father of the maiden fair with full fifty armed men. The maiden trembled, but the young knight only laughed and pointed down the road, for beyond the singing pine was the noble baron, his father, in his gilded coach, and with him there were full five hundred well-armed men. Then the maiden's father made his obeisance before the glittering

young knight who stood in front of the five hundred well-armed men and said: —

"I only came to pay the shilling that I owe you." But the young knight laughed and rejoined merrily: —

"Give us your blessing, my new father-in-law, and we won't ask for the shilling."

So the young knight set out for his own castle with the maiden fair, and on the way he told her about his ten schools. "And here 's the tenth schoolmaster," he said, as they came to the crooked little hole, and the crooked little man put his head out to wish them joy.

"And what did he teach you?" asked the maiden fair.

"To work seven years for what I wanted," answered the young knight. Then said the maiden fair to the crooked little man: —

"Come to the castle and live with us, and you shall have the best room in all the house, for if it had not been for you, I should never have had my brave young knight."

THE DEMON LOVER

"THE masts are all of beaten gold, Annie. They say the king's boat has golden masts."

"Then it is the king that is coming, Robin. The sails are all of silk. Let's hide, Robin, and watch the king come off his bonny ship."

"When we're grown up, Annie, you'll be my own sweetheart, and I'll go to the wars and fight and win you a better boat than this, for it shall have three golden masts instead of two, and the sails shall not be of silk but of thick satin; and they shall shine in the sunlight, and when you see them away over the water, you'll be glad and you'll say, 'My own Robin is coming home to me.' But you'll be true to me, won't you, Annie?"

Little Annie threw her arms around his neck and kissed his rosy lips and said:—

"I don't like any other boy nearly so well as I do you, and I'll give you half the sugar heart that my uncle is going to bring me from London town. Really I will. But look, the king's coming off the boat."

"The king" came slowly up the little path

to where the two children sat half hidden by the bushes. He glanced at them and tossed each one a gold piece.

"Thank you, sir," said Robin, and little Annie asked shyly: —

"Please tell me, sir, are you the king?"

The stranger looked at her a minute, then turned aside and glanced at the marble house on the hill. His face grew fierce and he said: —

"I am not the king; I am One Who Returns."

"What is it, Robin?" asked little Annie, trembling. "I am afraid of him. Is the gold witches' gold? Let's take it to the priest and ask if it will hurt us."

Up the path to the highway and then along the highway strode One Who Returns, until he came to the lofty gates of the marble house that stood on the hill with the poplars all around it. The gate-keeper did not come out, and no one saw the gate open, but one moment One Who Returns was outside the gate, and the next moment he was inside, and was walking rapidly up the hill to the marble house among the poplars.

The beautiful lady by the window waved her hand and threw a kiss to him, and when he had come up the steps, the door was open and she was standing on the threshold, and she smiled and cried : —

" Oh, where have you been, my long-lost love ? Seven long years it is since you went away from me."

" It 's you that I 've come for," replied One Who Returns. " Seven years agone you gave me your promise, and I 've come for my wife."

" But I cannot be your wife," said she, " for I 'm the wife of him that built me this marble house on the hill."

" You forgot me in three short months, while I was in the land ayont the water. For seven long years I worked for you, and I have seven ships on the sea. The eighth one it is that has brought me to this land. The keel is of silver, and the masts are of gold, and the sails are of silk, and it was all for you. There are four and twenty bold mariners, and there 's music on every hand, and it was all for you. Go to the tower of your marble house on the hill, and look over

the poplars down to the ocean, and you 'll see the silver ship with the silken sails; but you 'll not see the pearls and the diamonds and the rubies, though there 's many a casket brimming over with them; and there are silken robes, and there 's a mantle, and all around the mantle is a vine that the wisest woman in the land ayont the sea embroidered, and in every leaf is a green emerald, and in the heart of every bluebell is a sapphire; and these are what I brought for you. You would not wait for me. You would not keep your word to me, and now you live in the marble house on the hill. But go you to the tower and look down upon my boat. The sun will be low, and I must hie me back to the far-away land, for there 's where a king's daughter lives, and it 's to her that I will carry the mantle that the wise woman wrought and the caskets that are brimming over with pearls and rubies and diamonds."

Then the beautiful lady went slowly up the stairs to the tower. She opened the little door and looked out of the window.

"I had forgotten that the trees were so high," she thought, for she did not know

that the poplars were reaching up and all about the tower so that she should not see the silver boat; and she would not listen to them, although they were saying over and over: —

"Stay with us, stay with us, stay, stay."

Slowly she came down the broad marble stairs, and she said to One Who Returns: —

"The trees are grown so high that I could not see the silver boat, but I might walk down to the shore with you and look at it."

The poplar-trees still whispered: —

"Stay with us, stay with us, stay, stay," but she did not understand, for she could no longer tell what the trees and the flowers were saying. The great dog at the door looked at her wistfully with his soft brown eyes. They were softer than ever, for there were tears in them; but she could no longer understand what tears meant in the eyes of one that loved her. She turned to him who had come from the land ayont the sea and asked: —

"If I were to leave the marble house and my husband and my two children and go with you on the silver ship, where is it that you would take me?"

One Who Returns bent low as he kissed her hand, and when he lifted his head, there was a bracelet on her wrist that had not been there before, and it flashed with all the precious stones that any one ever heard of; and as she looked at it, she forgot that he had not said where they would go if she went on the sea with him.

She kissed her two babes as they lay fast asleep and passed out of the door of the marble house on the hill. The great dog gave a sad little cry that came from down in his faithful heart, but she did not hear it, and the two went swiftly down the hill to the seashore.

"Where is the silver ship?" she asked, and One Who Returns stamped his foot on the ground and said over some words that she did not understand, and in a moment the silver ship was floating before them, and the sails were of silk and the masts were of beaten gold, just as One Who Returns had said; and as they went aboard, there was a strange, sweet music all about them in the air.

"How like you the silver ship and the

blue ocean, and how are you pleased with the mariners bold that wait upon you and me?" asked One Who Returns.

"Well do I like the ship," she answered, "and well do I like the ocean, but where are the mariners bold, and why does the ship go so swiftly? The golden masts do not bend over the billows, and the silken sails do not fill in the breeze that blows us away from the land of the marble house."

Faster and faster went the silver ship, but One Who Returns spoke no word to her, and every minute his face grew more gloomy and his eyes more fiery. One league they sailed, another and another. She looked at him in terror, and then she noticed that the golden bracelet on her wrist had become an iron chain. She feared and she wept right bitterly.

The boat rocked from side to side, and One Who Returns said harshly: —

"Cease your weeping. Tears will sometimes wreck a boat like this, silver though it be, and with sails of silk and masts of beaten gold. I can show you strange countries ayont the sea, lands where lilies grow for her

that is pure in heart and true to her word." He laughed bitterly, but she did not hear him, for her eyes were fixed on the land that lay behind them.

"Oh, I wish I was again in the marble house among the poplars," she sobbed; and then she asked: —

"Are those my own hills, those pleasant hills that the sun shines so sweetly on?" and One Who Returns said with a sneer: —

"Those are the hills of the land of light, but it's there that you will never go."

Then she turned about and looked ahead.

"And what is that black and fearful mountain," she asked, "so dreary with frost and snow?"

"That's the mountain that stands at the gate of the land of darkness," said One Who Returns, "and it's there that you and I must go. She who is false to one will be false to two; but you'll have no chance to be false to me again, my lady of the house on the hill."

Then while she lay trembling in the bottom of the boat, One Who Returns struck the mast a fearful blow, and it sank down

through the bottom of the silver boat. The silken sails shriveled as he breathed upon them, the boat broke in twain, and the lady and the demon, who had taken the form of the dead lover to whom she had been so false, went throught the gate beside the dreary mountain, the gate that leads to the land of darkness.

ROBIN HOOD'S RUEFUL GUEST

"MASTER, you have not dined to-day," said Little John.

"How can one dine without a guest?" asked Robin Hood, for Robin was the most hospitable outlaw that ever lived in Bernisdale. "Go find me a guest," said he, "and then will we dine and make merry with the best of them. Do you go, my trusty Little John, and Much the miller's son and William Scarlet; and when you come back, there shall be a feast whose like you never saw before."

"And whither shall we go?" asked Little John, "and whom shall we bring to dine with us?"

"Take your good bow in your hand," answered Robin, "and wend your way to the Sayles and then to Watling Street. If you see a faithful squire, bow low before him and say, 'Robin Hood sends you his greeting;' and if you see an honest yeoman, whisper in his ear, 'There 'll be a bit of light-foot waiting for you this night at the edge

of the forest;' and if you see a husbandman toiling at the plough, slip up behind him and drop a silver shilling over his shoulder into the furrow; and if you see a parish priest, kneel and ask his blessing; but if you meet a bishop or an archbishop, bind him and beat him and make him pay for ransom; and don't forget our old friend, the high Sheriff of Nottingham. When you come to Watling Street, there 'll surely be some abbot or some proud knight. He 's the man for our feast."

To the Sayles went the three good yeomen, but not a guest found they for the dinner. At last, far down a narrow road, they saw a lonely knight come riding along. Never was there a more forlorn rider. One foot was in the stirrup and one hung down. His hood had dropped over his eyes, his lance dragged on the ground and made a zigzag mark in the dust behind him. The reins had fallen from his hands and his horse wandered where he would, trying to get a morsel of food from the grass by the road or from the overhanging trees.

Little John dropped on one knee, but the

knight rode drearily by without noticing him. Then Little John called out: —

"Welcome, gentle knight, welcome to the good greenwood. My master sends you greeting and bids you come and dine with him. Three long hours he has waited for you."

"Three long hours," repeated softly and feelingly the other two men who stood behind him.

The knight returned their courteous greeting and queried languidly: —

"And who is your master?"

"Robin Hood," said they.

"He is a good man," said the knight. "I meant to dine at Blythe or at Dancastere, but it is no matter. I will go with you into the greenwood." The little company went on, but not very joyfully, for three of them were hungry, and one was so downcast that in spite of all he could do, the tears ran out of his eyes and rolled down his cheeks. When they came to the lodge in the forest, Robin doffed his hat and bowed before the melancholy knight and bade him welcome.

"The meal is ready," said Robin, "and

these three hours I have been waiting for you. Now fall to and eat your fill." And so they all sat down to the feast. There was bread and wine and venison and swans and pheasants and every kind of bird that flies in the trees and every kind of fish that swims in the rivers, and by and by the knight exclaimed: —

"Enough, good Robin, enough! Such a dinner have I not had for three long weeks, and if ever again I am in this country, I will give you as good a feast as you have given me."

"That's all very well," said Robin, "but that's far away, and you surely would not go hence to-day and leave a yeoman to pay for a knight."

"Indeed, I am ashamed," responded the knight sadly, "but I have eaten the dinner, and now I have nothing to pay. There are but ten shillings in my purse."

"If you do not tell me the truth," said Robin, "it will be the worse for you."

"I have only ten shillings in the world," declared the knight.

"Go and see if he speaks true," bade

Robin; so Little John spread the knight's mantle on the ground and emptied the knight's purse into it, and it was all as he had said, for there was just half a pound.

"Bring on the best wine," commanded Robin. "If a man's clothes are thin, he needs more under them. When he has had enough, he shall tell us how it is that a knight has no money."

So after they had drunk their fill, the knight told them that his only son had slain a man, and to save him from the gallows he had given all his money, and had mortgaged his land to a rich abbot for four hundred pounds.

"Have you no friends to lend you the money to redeem your land?" asked Robin.

"Friends enough had I once," said the knight, "but now they do not know me when I pass them;" and again the tears fell from his eyes. Then wept also Little John and Much the miller's son and William Scarlet, and when Robin passed the knight the wine bottle once more, there were tears on that too.

"And if your land is gone," queried

Robin, "what will you do?" and the knight answered: —

"I've nothing left but my sword, and I'm on my way to the countries far beyond the seas, and mayhap there'll be a king who wants a soldier."

"A pretty soldier you would be," laughed Robin, "with the tears running down your cheeks and rusting your helmet. It does not suit me to let that fat abbot have your good land. Little John, go you straight to my treasure-room and bring me full four hundred pounds." So Little John went to the treasure-room, but fast as he went, William Scarlet was before him, and together they brought back full four hundred pounds.

"Master," said Little John, "his cloak is too thin for the forest winds. Will you not give him warm clothes to go forth in? You have good cloth of green and scarlet and many another color. There is n't a merchant in England who has half so much, I'll venture to say." Then bade Robin Hood: —

"Give him three yards of every color, and see to it that you cut good measure;" and Little John took for his yardstick no other

measure than his own long bow. Then William Scarlet laughed loud and long.

"You may well give good measure, Little John," said he, "for it 's small cost it was to any of us."

"Master," asked Little John, "the knight's old beast would fall by the way under all this load; could you not spare him a goodly horse?"

"Give him a good gray courser," ordered Robin, "and a new saddle."

"And I 'll give him a palfrey," said Much the miller's son.

"And a pair of gilt spurs," added Little John.

And so the rueful knight rode happily on his way. He went straight to the abbot and redeemed his lands, and forever afterward there was one knight who was a true friend to the men who lived in the good greenwood.

ONE WHO WOULD HARM

MARGRET, Margret!" called a harsh voice, and Margret sprang from her bed and looked through the crack between the shutters. The moon was behind a cloud, but she could see that some one was standing under her window.

"I want you more than I ever wanted maiden before," said the same harsh voice, "and I've come to carry you away to the den that's under the crag and the hemlock."

"Oh no, no!" cried Margret, but the shutters were burst open and she could feel a strong hand lay hold of her. Margret did not try to free herself, and the voice muttered: —

"I'll soon arouse her," and he shook the girl roughly till she came to herself.

"It's almost one by the castle bell," said he. "Will you meet me on the Broomfield Hill next Sunday night?"

"Oh no, no!" cried Margret, shuddering.

"No?" said the voice. "You will be on the top of Broomfield Hill next Sunday night before the bell has struck the last stroke of

twelve, or I 'll come for you. I 'll come down the hill and through the wood and over the stream and along the path by the meadow; and the house 'll be burned and the goodman slain and the goodwife will be drowned in the Lonely Pool, and the little lame brother will be thrown on the distant rock, and the eagles will scatter his bones. Be on Broomfield Hill before the bell has done striking twelve, for you are to go with me to the den that is under the crag and the hemlock. This is to remind you. See that you do not take it off," and the strong hand slipped a ring on her finger.

Margret heard a hoarse laugh. Then the castle bell struck one, and all was silent.

"It was a fearful dream," said Margret, and she threw wider open the casement of the window. There was no one to be seen, and the only living creature was a great gray wolf far across the meadow, running swiftly in the pale moonlight.

"It was a terrible dream," said Margret, and she sobbed herself to sleep. When she awoke, her old nurse was sitting by her and holding her hand.

"Where got you the ring, my own nursling?" asked the old woman.

"Oh, it's true," said Margret, and she burst out crying, and told her old nurse all about it. "If I don't go to Broomfield Hill next Sunday night before the bell is done striking twelve, he will come and burn the house and kill my father and drown my mother in the Lonely Pool, and throw my little lame brother on the distant rock, and carry me away to the den under the crag and the hemlock. Oh, the ring burns me! Take it off, nurse."

The nurse tried and tried, but the ring would not come off. It was large and heavy and of some bright green metal. It was in the form of a serpent, and it coiled and uncoiled and shot out red flames from its fiery eyes, and try as they would, they could not stir it from her finger.

"It's magic, my poor lassie," sobbed the old nurse, "but what magic has done, magic can undo. It's one thing I know, and mayhap it's two things, and it might be that I could free my own dear nursling. It's well that the goodman and the goodwife and the little

lame brother are away, for one must ask no questions save with the eyes when there is magic about."

"And what must I do, nurse?" moaned Margret.

"You must go to the little north room under the chimney," answered the nurse, "and there you must stay without bite or sup till Sunday night when the castle bell has struck one, and not man or woman or child may you see and no word may you speak. When it is day, the ring will be still; but when night comes, it will sting and burn. Not all the magic that I know can help that, but when the castle bell has struck, then if the sunlight has shone into your window for but a single moment, you will be free from the ring, and mayhap no harm will come to you or the goodman or the goodwife or the little lame brother."

"But the sun will never shine into the north window," sobbed Margret.

"What's done is done," said the nurse, "and what has not been done is yet to be done."

So the maiden went tearfully to the north

room and sat down on a little stool by the window, and the nurse went out of the room and turned the key; and while the maiden sobbed on one side of the door, the nurse sobbed on the other.

Now the good nurse had a long journey to take through the land of briers and thorns to find the enchanted iron. She must go on foot and alone, and she must go over morasses and close to the Dragon's Den and under the Clutching Tree and beyond the Quaking Rocks. "It's for my own nursling," she said to herself, and she kept on bravely, and just one hour before sunset that Sunday evening she came through the last stile.

She did not stop even to glance up to the north window, for there was only one hour left, and there was much to do. Just how she brought it about she would never tell, but when all was calm and quiet and the sun was sinking peacefully behind the hill, a wind suddenly arose, such a wind as had never been seen before. It shook down the barns and tossed the trees about like feathers and overturned the rocks. All was still for

A HANDSOME YOUNG KNIGHT

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a moment, then it seized upon the house and turned it quite around on its foundation.

The maiden sat by the window on the little wooden stool with her hand on which was the fearful ring hanging over the sill. When the house was swiftly whirled about, the last rays of the western sun shone for an instant upon the ring. The serpent hissed fiercely and the ring fell from her finger to the ground. The old nurse caught it up and clapped her hands for joy; and the maiden smiled faintly, for she was too weak to wave her hand.

Then the nurse took the ring and set out for the top of Broomfield Hill. Not yet had the bell in the castle tower struck twelve when she made her way up softly among the bushes. Lying on the ground with his head under the red rose tree was a handsome young knight asleep, and near him were his horse, his hound, and his gay goshawk.

"I'll soon see if you are real or enchanted," said the nurse, and she shook the ring before them. The horse and the hound and the gay goshawk only blinked at it

sleepily, but it was different with the handsome young knight, and the nurse held up her hands in horror when she looked at him.

"That 's worse than I ever thought," she said to herself, and she slipped the serpent ring on his finger and went softly down the hill.

When the knight awoke and saw the serpent ring, he called to his horse: —

"Why did you not wake me when the maiden came?"

"No maiden has been here," answered the horse. Then he struck the horse so that he fell down dead, and he turned to the dog.

"Why did you not wake me when the maiden came?"

"No maiden has been here," answered the dog. Then he struck the dog so that he fell down dead, and turned to the gay goshawk.

"Why did you not wake me when the maiden came?"

"No maiden has been here," answered the gay goshawk; and he did not wait to be struck down dead, but flew high over the hill and the forest and the meadow till he came to where the nurse was going around

the house in a great circle dragging a bit of the enchanted iron after her, mumbling magical words and crooning magical songs.

"Hasten," the gay goshawk called. "He Who Would Harm is coming, and he is as swift as the wind over a field of rye."

Then the old nurse went faster and faster, but try as she would, He Who Would Harm was upon her before she had drawn the third circle, the one that would have made the maiden safe.

"Perhaps even now it will hold," said the old nurse; but he leaped lightly over the first circle. Then he ran swiftly to the second and leaped over that. Now nothing was between him and the maiden, and the nurse could just see through her tears the little white face in the north window.

"I have you now!" he cried, and stretched up his strong arm. Just as it almost touched her shoulder, the castle bell struck one, and the house dogs ran out howling savagely; and when the maiden looked, One Who Would Harm was nowhere to be seen, but the dogs were tearing to pieces a great gray wolf that lay dead under her window.

THE BARRING OF THE DOOR

HAVE you gone clean daft, goodwife?"

"I've been a-thinking, goodman."

"I never do that, and there was none of our folks that ever got up in the night to think. And what are you stirring the fire for, goodwife?"

"To make it burn, goodman."

"Our folks never stirred the fire in the night. What are you going to do, goodwife?"

"I'm going to make a white pudding, goodman."

"Our folks never made white puddings in the night. And what'll you do then, goodwife?"

"Then I'll make a black pudding, goodman."

"Did ever a man have such a wife!" exclaimed her goodman. "What are you making it for, goodwife?"

"For people to eat, goodman."

"Our folks did n't eat in the night, goodwife," said her puzzled goodman.

"No, but there may be those a-coming that will eat by day, and what should I do if I had n't any white puddings and if I had n't any black puddings, goodman?"

"People did n't come to see our folks when we did n't have any puddings, goodwife."

"That 's because you always had them, goodman."

"I never thought of that, goodwife. I could n't think like that by daylight."

And so the goodwife raked away the ashes and blew the fire and pulled the crane forward and hung a heavy iron pot on it that was full of water fresh from the well; and then she brought out a great wooden bowl, and into it she put more different things than one could dream of in a month of Saturday mornings. She stirred them and rolled them and twisted them and pulled them and mixed them and seasoned them and pounded them and kneaded them and shook them, until they were so confused that they did not know whether they were several things or one thing. But the goodwife was a wise woman and she knew. She gave a little pat and

then a little toss, and there was the pudding round as a ball, and she tied it into a cloth and put it into the iron pot to boil.

This was the white pudding. Then came the black, and that was much larger than the white, because black flour did not cost so much as white flour. The water in the iron pot was boiling out, and the goodwife went to the well for more.

"Bar the door, goodwife; you've left it open," said her goodman.

"That's because I did not shut it," retorted the goodwife.

"Our folks always shut the door when the wind blew cold from the north and the east."

"Well, there's one of your folks here now," said his goodwife. "You wouldn't ask a woman with her hands in a pudding to go and shut the door, now would you really, goodman?"

"But you left it open," said her goodman. "Our folks always shut the door when they left it open."

"I don't," said his goodwife. "When I leave it open, it is open; and it'll be open for this hundred years if you wait for me to

shut it. And I won't say another word," she added, "till you get up and bar the door, and not let your goodwife stand and make a pudding all a-shiver."

"And I won't say another word till you get up and bar the door and not let your goodman lie in bed all a-shiver."

"You 'll have to ask for some of my pudding in the morning."

"And you 'll have to ask me to split some more wood to-night, or your pudding won't be done."

"Then I 'll eat pudding and you may eat wood," said his goodwife, "and the one that speaks first shall get up and bar the door."

Away down the lane were two gentlemen thieves who had been robbing a rich man's house.

"Pretty heavy lugging, this great bag of silver," said one.

"Heavier lugging, this great bag of gold," said the other.

"I 'll ease you of it," said the first. "We 'll make a bet and I 'll win. There 's a light up the lane. If it is a poor man's house, I 'll give you my bag; and if it 's a

rich man's house, you give me yours." So they crept softly up to the cottage and peeped in at the door.

"There 's no one there but a sick man in bed and a woman boiling a pudding," said one.

"I like the smell of that pudding. Let 's leave our bags under the hedge and go in and ask for some," whispered the other.

"We 'll ask first whether they are rich or poor," said the first, "and then we 'll know who 'll have to carry the bags. I think they 're poor, for they have to work by day and cook by night."

"And I think they 're rich, or else they would n't have puddings enough to cook all day and all night too," rejoined the other. So the two gentlemen thieves crept nearer and nearer to the house. They laid their bags down softly under the hedge and then walked boldly up to the door.

"Is this a rich man's house or is it a poor?" they asked. The goodman frowned at them and the goodwife smiled at them, but neither of them spoke a word for the barring of the door.

"It 's a rich man's house," said one of the gentlemen thieves. "See all the good things she 's been putting into the pudding!"

"It 's a poor man's house," retorted the other. "Look at the old man's beard! He 's not been shaved for a good twelvemonth." Then, for the pudding kept on smelling better and better, one of the gentlemen thieves pleaded: —

"Goodwife, we be two poor travelers. Could you give us a bit of your pudding? It 's we that have been hard at work this night."

What the goodwife would have said, if she had said anything, no one knows, but she dared not speak at all, for her goodman was grinning at her and pointing to the door. The two gentlemen thieves went to the great iron pot and took out the puddings on the points of their swords, and held them up over the white scoured floor to drain. Then they sat down to the table and cut off great pieces of them. First they ate the white pudding and then they ate the black, though that was not very well done, for the fire had given out because there was no more wood.

The goodman smiled and said to himself: —

"That 's what she has for getting up to think in the night after the moon has gone down over the poplar-tree behind the well. Our folks never got up in the night to think." The goodwife sat on a bench in the corner of the fireplace watching the two gentlemen thieves devouring her nice puddings.

"And if my sister and my sister's goodman and the eleven children should come tomorrow, there would n't be bite or sup for them," she said to herself.

At last the two gentlemen thieves had finished eating the puddings. "Hark!" whispered one. "Is n't that the sound of a horse's hoofs? We 'd better be going."

"I 'll go after I 've kissed the goodwife," said the other. "And do you shave off the goodman's beard."

"There 's no hot water," objected the first.

"Take the pudding broth," said the other.

Then the goodman jumped out of bed, seized the iron pot, and flung the hot broth into the faces of the two gentlemen thieves.

"You would kiss my wife before my eyes, would you?" he cried, "and scald me with pudding broth!" But the goodwife sprang up from the chimney corner and clapped her hands and gave three skips on the floor.

"Goodman, you 've said the first word! Now go and bar the door."

As for the two gentlemen thieves, they thought that the goodman and the goodwife had suddenly gone crazy, and they ran for their lives, slamming the door behind them, a thing which neither thieves nor gentlemen are accustomed to do. They ran down the lane, over the hedge, into the briers, across the meadow, over a brook, through the high grass, until the first thing that they knew, they were in the middle of a pond, and they had to scramble out as best they could, for they did not dare to call to any one to help them.

The next morning when the goodwife threw open the door and went to get a pail of fresh water, she saw down under the hedge two loaded bags, one full of silver and the other full of gold.

"Goodman, come out here!" she cried.

"There 's a bag of gold for the white pudding, and there 's a bag of silver for the black; and I 'm going to make a pudding every night of my life."

"None of our folks ever did," said her goodman.

TAMLANE

BURN your nuts on the hearth," said the old nurse, "and eat your apples before the glass, and your own true love will come and look over your shoulder; but go you not out of the house door this night, for the witches and the warlocks are abroad and mayhap the fiend himself."

"But I am going out on the moor to sow the hemp seed; and when I look over my left shoulder, I'll see no face in a glass, but I'll see my own sweetheart," said Janet, the fairest of the maidens.

"Willful wanderers walk in woeful ways," grumbled the nurse, "and it's sorry you'll be if you go out on the moor this night. There's bogies and ghosts and demons, and there's Tamlane, and it's Tamlane that comes out of the bush on the moor by the well, and if he sees a maiden, she must give him her golden ring off her finger or her mantle of green off her shoulders, or else he'll take her on his milk-white steed and carry her away to Elfinland."

"I'll give him no gold ring off my finger,

and I 'll give him no green mantle off my shoulders, and I 'll not go to Elfinland with him!" cried fair Janet, "but it 's out on the moor to Carterhaugh that I 'll go this night. It 's my own land, and may I not walk on my own sod?" and the willful maiden tucked up her green skirt and braided her yellow hair, and she flung wide the house door and sped over the moor to Carterhaugh.

The moon shone bright, and over the grass were the elfin rings, but fair Janet went boldly on to the haunted well, scattering the hemp seed as she walked. The water gleamed in the moonlight, and beside the well was a bush of red roses. Fair Janet plucked a rose and put it in her hair, and the water in the well gurgled and murmured and seemed to be trying to make words.

"The rose is my own," said fair Janet, "and I 'll pluck it for all the water that is in the well." She plucked a second rose and put it in her bosom, and then she heard the neighing of a milk-white steed that stood by the well.

"The rose is my own," said fair Janet, "and I 'll pluck it for all the milk-white

steeds in the countryside," and she put forth her hand to pluck a third rose, but a voice came from out the bush: —

"Why do you break the tree, Janet? and why come you to Carterhaugh when you 've asked no leave of me?"

"And why should I ask leave of you? Is not the land my own? My father left it to me, and I 'll come and go as I will without the leave of ghost or goblin."

"But I 'm no ghost or goblin, Janet. My hand is as warm as yours," and a warm, firm hand reached out from the bush and gently clasped her own.

"You 're no true man," said fair Janet, "if you were not christened at the church door."

"But I was christened at the church door as well as you, Janet, and it was on the selfsame day. You are the child of the Earl of March, and I 'm the son of the Earl of Murray. I 've loved you all my life, Janet, for I was the little boy with whom you used to play."

"And if you 've loved me all your life," asked fair Janet, "where have you been these many years?"

"There 's been but one day in the year for me, Janet, and that was the eve of All Hallows Day, for then I was free to come to the well, and weary my heart with hoping and waiting for you."

"But who has held you so fast?" questioned Janet; and then Tamlane came from out the bush, and they sat beside the well, and the milk-white steed softly cropped the grass in the moonlight, and the water in the well laughed gently to itself, and murmured sweet little forgotten tunes.

"It was a bitter cold night," said Tamlane, "and the wind blew out of the north. A sleep like death came over me. I fell from my horse into a fairy ring, and the Queen of Elfinland bore me away to yonder green hill."

"Is not the Queen fairer than any maiden on earth, Tamlane?"

"She 's not so fair as yourself, Janet."

"Is not Elfinland a bonnier place than the earth, Tamlane?"

"'T is a bonny place, indeed, Janet, but every seventh year there 's one of us must go to the fiend, and I fear it will be myself, Ja-

"SHE'S NOT SO FAIR AS YOURSELF, JANET"

net. Only the maid that I love can save me, and there 's none that I love but you, Janet."

"And what must I do?" whispered fair Janet, and Tamlane answered joyfully: —

"To-night is Halloween, and she that dares to stand by the old Miles Cross can free her own true love from all the magic of Elfinland. Are you my own true love, Janet?"

"And what should I do if I were, Tamlane?"

"You must go alone to the Cross, Janet. 'T is an eerie, fearsome way, but no harm will come to her who goes forth in the gloom of the midnight, if it be to save her own heart's love. You must take holy water in your hand and sprinkle it in a great circle round about. When the bell strikes twelve, all the folk of Elfinland will ride by, and I shall be among them."

"But how shall I know you, Tamlane?"

"Let the first company pass, Janet; let the second, too, go by; but when the third company draws close, then if your love is true and your heart does not fail from fear, you can see me and free me, for all the powers of Elfinland."

"Shall you be on the horse, Tamlane?"

"I'll be on my own milk-white steed, Janet, and there 'll be a crown on my head because I was a knight; and there 'll be a gold star in the crown because I was a christened child. Let pass the black horse, let pass the brown, but cling fast to the milk-white steed and pull the rider to the ground;" and the great white horse neighed gently and rested his head softly on Janet's shoulder. Janet looked back and stroked his face.

"And if I forget how you look, Tamlane, I 'll know you by the milk-white steed."

"When you have me, Janet, the trouble 's only begun. Can you hold me fast and have no fear?"

"I never feared aught on the earth," said Janet, "and I'll not begin to-night."

"But they'll come in awesome shapes, Janet, and they 'll turn me to a lizard and they'll turn me to an adder, and then I 'll be a flame of fire; but last of all, I 'll lie in your arms like a new-born babe, and if you throw your green mantle over me, I'll be a man on earth again and your own true love forever and aye."

So to the church went fair Janet, and called for the priest.

"Give me some holy water, I pray, for to-night I must meet the fiends."

"Let me go with you," urged the priest, but fair Janet shook her head.

"Sometimes one must meet the fiends alone," she said, "and there 's one that I love that says they 'll do me no harm if my love is true, and my heart does not fail."

So over the moor and across the brook and by the narrow path through the woods went fair Janet with the holy water in her hand; and when she came to Miles Cross, she sprinkled the holy water all around, and then she stood still and clung to the Cross for fear, for over the little hill came riding the folk of Elfinland. The first company passed, and the second passed. Then came the black horse, and the rider was something terrible to look upon, and Janet, who had never feared anything on earth, began to tremble. Then came the brown horse, and the rider was even more terrible, and Janet, who had never feared anything on earth, felt a cold chill strike her heart. Then came the

milk-white steed. She trembled no more, and her heart was warm again, for the rider was her own true love.

The milk-white steed neighed softly, and she threw her arms about his neck, and she pulled the rider down. Such an eldritch screech arose from the ghastly company that the moon hid her face behind a cloud, and the great gray owl on the tree cried, "Hoot!" and flew far away into the forest; but Janet only looked into the eyes of her own true love, and clasped him firmly to her heart. In a moment he was gone, and she was holding a loathsome lizard to her breast. She shut her eyes, but she would not let it go. Then the lizard vanished, and now she was clinging to an adder that hissed and twined, but she would not let it go. Then the adder vanished, and her arms were empty of aught save a flame of fire that rose above her and whispered fearsome words in her ear, but she would not let it go. And then the fire was gone, and in her arms he lay like a new-born babe, and she threw her green mantle over him and kissed him on the lips, for her true love was all her own.

The horrible company disappeared, but from over the hill came a voice more hateful than one could dream, for it was the angry voice of the Queen of Elfinland, and it shrieked: —

"If I had known, Tamlane, that you had looked upon the woman that would steal you from me, I would have plucked out your two gray eyes and put in two eyes of wood; and if I had known, Tamlane, that your heart had had a thought of the woman that would steal you from me, I would have plucked out your warm, red heart and put into your breast a heart of stone; and if yesterday I had been wise, Tamlane, as wise as I am to-day, I would have paid my toll to the fiend seven times over before you should have been stolen away from me."

The bell on the tower struck one, and the moon shone bright. Tamlane and fair Janet walked together in the narrow little path through the ferns and under the pine-trees to the great door of the hall, and contentedly stepping after them, there followed on the milk-white steed.

PATIENT ANNIE

I GOT no gold for your dower, Annie, nor rents nor lands in fee."

"Truly, no, Lord Thomas," said patient Annie.

"The lord of a castle grand should have gold and silver to pay his merrymen, and he should have noble steeds and brightly burnished warcoats. There should be red jewels at the hilt of his sword, and when he goes to see the king, there should be green jewels and blue jewels on the buckles of his shoes."

"Truly, yes, Lord Thomas."

"And he should have rents and wide-spreading lands in fee. I have little but my bare castle walls, Annie; but if I 'd had a dower with you, I should have had rents and gold, and lands as far as my eyes can see."

"I would that I had brought you a goodly dower, Lord Thomas."

"You know that I love you well, Annie, and you 've been a true wife to me, and you 've borne me seven fair young sons; but I 've neither gold nor land to give them.

There's but one thing to do, Annie; you must go away with your seven sons and I will wed a new bride from some land far over the sea who will bring me a great dower." Then patient Annie began to plead with him not to send her away.

"I'll bake your bridal loaf," she said, "and brew the bridal ale, and I'll give the welcome to your new lady, and I'll never let her know that I was once your bride; but do not send me away from the sight of you. My seven young sons shall be her pages, and I'll do for her all that one woman may do for another, but do not bid me depart where I shall never look upon your face again."

Lord Thomas sailed away to the land beyond the seas, and after a year and a day patient Annie went up to the highest tower of the castle with her eldest son to see if her lord's ship was coming over the ocean. There was a sparkling and a shining far to the westward.

"What see you, my eldest boy, far over the water in the place where the sun goes down?"

"I see a shining and a sparkling, mother

mine, and I see the topmast of my father's vessel, and it 's all of the glittering gold, and the mainmast is of silver, and there are flags and banners streaming in the wind, and it is coming straight to our own land."

"Look forth once again, my eldest son. Is there anything more to see?"

"On the one side of the ship is a bonny maiden, and she 's all in cloth of silver, and she has jewels in her hair and around her neck and on her fingers, and many a brilliant lady in waiting is with her. On the other side is my father, and he 's all in velvet and gold. He 's looking up here to the high tower, my mother. What may it mean? Is it a fairy wonder?"

"No fairy wonder is it, my eldest son; but I 'm no longer your father's wife, for a noble lord must have gold and rents and lands. I brought him no penny of dowry, and that is why he had to go to some distant realm to bring him home a new bride whose gold can pay the merrymen and buy horses and jewels and swords."

"I 'll meet him at the shore, and I 'll fight him, mother mine."

"Then you 'll break my heart, my eldest son. You and your brothers six must dress yourselves quickly in your silken clothes, and you must go with me to the shore; and when the boat comes in and the lady steps upon the land, you must take off your caps and bow yourselves before her, and say, 'Welcome, beautiful bride,' for she 's the maiden that your father has brought from some distant land to be his wife. You must all be her pages, for to-night she 'll be wedded to Lord Thomas, and I shall be her waiting maid."

Then patient Annie took the loaf of the white bridal bread and a golden pitcher of the red bridal wine, and, leading her seven fair sons, she went down to the shore to meet Lord Thomas and his bride. The little boys were all in silk, but their mother wore a gown of the coarsest tow. "I 'm but a serving maid," said she, "to wait upon the bride and her lord."

The pages took off their little caps and knelt before the bride, as their mother had taught them to do, and patient Annie bowed herself like a lowly village maiden and of-

fered the lady the wine and the white bridal loaf.

"You 're welcome to your own castle, Lord Thomas," said Annie, "and a welcome to you, gentle lady. Welcome to your hall and your bower and to your own home, madam, for you 're to be the bride of my lord, and all that 's here is yours."

There was a splendid feast, and all the great ladies and the nobles from the distant land sat long at the table, and patient Annie served them faithfully and well with the white bread and the brown bread and the wine; but whenever she turned herself away from the merry company, the salt tears fell and fell, and at last she hung one napkin at the door and another in the hall, so that she might wipe her bright eyes whenever she went out of the feasting-room.

When the bride left the merry company to go to her bower to robe herself for the wedding, patient Annie went high up to the tower that looked over the land and the sea, and there all by her lone self she made her moan.

"What shall I do?" she sobbed. "Shall

I go to the salt, salt sea, or shall I wander through the forest far and far away? No longer can I bide in the castle, or my heart will break."

"Not yet will your true heart break, my lady," said a voice behind her; "there is more yet for you to do."

Patient Annie wiped her eyes and turned herself about, and there was an old, old man who dwelt in the castle. Some believed that he had dwelt there since the first stone was laid in the castle wall.

"I am an old, old man, my lady," said he, "and I can see as far into what is to come as you can see into what has been. Not to the salt sea must you go, nor to the far-spreading forest, not even to the little lane that leads to the green meadow. When twilight comes on, the lady of the castle should abide in her own house, and not wander forth into the haunts of robbers and those that lie in wait to do men harm."

"Alas, the robbers have come to my own house," said Annie.

"Did you not promise to do all that you could to make the bride welcome, all that

one woman could do for another?" asked the old, old man.

"Yes," answered patient Annie, "and I met her at the shore with the wine and the white bridal bread, and I waited on her at the feasting, and I gave her my own fair sons to be her pages. What more could I have done?"

"There's one thing more that you must do for her," declared the old, old man. "There's no other lady in all the land that can play on the harp so well as yourself. Go take your harp, and sit you down outside the door of her bower, and play to her and sing to her. Sing all the sweet songs that you sang in your own land before you came here to be the bride of Lord Thomas."

"And must I do that too?" sobbed patient Annie.

"You must if you would keep your vow, my lady," said the old, old man.

So patient Annie wiped her eyes, and braided her hair, and took her harp, and sat outside the door of the lady's bower, where she was robing herself in her finest attire to wed the lord of the castle. Patient Annie

harped, and then she sang so sweetly and so sadly that the bower maidens all stopped their work to listen.

"Now sing the merry songs that you sang in your own land," bade the voice of the old, old man; and so, though it seemed as if her heart would surely break, she sang the merry songs that she had sung as a winsome, happy young girl in her own land; and she sang them so sweetly and so blithely that even the bride stopped to listen.

"Open the bower door," called the bride. "Those are the songs of my own home, and the voice is first sad and then joyful, like the voice of my own dear sister."

So the bower maidens threw open wide the door of the bower, and there sat patient Annie. The tears were in her eyes, but she sang cheerily the merry old songs.

"Where did you learn the sad songs and where did you learn the gay?" asked the bride.

"In my own homeland far over the sea," answered patient Annie. The bride stood still in the bower door. She had forgotten her silken gown and her pearls and her dia-

monds, and she had forgotten that the wedding guests were all waiting for her to come forth. She was looking and looking at patient Annie, and thinking and thinking of her own home in the distant land.

"Who was your father, my girl?" asked she. "Who was your mother? Had you ever a brother, and had you ever a little sister whom you loved so dearly?"

"My father was the Earl of Wemyss," answered patient Annie. "The Countess of Wemyss was my mother. I had a brother bold, but he had gone to the wars to fight, and there were none of us left at home save me and my one little sister whom I loved so dearly."

"How came you here?" asked the bride.

"I wedded the one that I love best," said Annie.

"Where is your dower, and why are you serving at the castle?"

"Do not ask me more, my lady," begged patient Annie, "or my heart will break. There 's yet one trouble that might come to me if I should not keep my vow, for I might be driven far away from him whom I love best."

"When I was but a wee, wee maid," said the bride, looking straight into the eyes of patient Annie, "I had a fair older sister; but when we were one day on the shore, a stranger ship came up to the land, and when it sailed, a Scottish lord bore away with him my own dear Annie. May he meet the evil death that he deserves!"

"Oh no, no, dear sister! Wish no such wishes against my own lord," cried Annie.

"Now I am sure," said the bride, and kissed her over and over again. "You are my own sister Annie, and Lord Thomas is the Scottish lord who bore you afar from your home, and for the sake of my dower — and half of it is your own, Annie — he put you away and he would marry me. Will you leave him and go home with me, Annie?"

"I cannot leave my own lord," murmured patient Annie, "for I love him best of all the world."

Then came a messenger from Lord Thomas: "My bride tarries long. The guests wait and the minstrels wait."

"Coming, coming, Lord Thomas," an-

swered the lady from over the sea. "Your own true bride will no longer delay."

Very soon was the beautiful bride led into the feasting hall. The minstrels played, and the guests all rose from their benches to drink her health. Then Lord Thomas lifted the veil from her face.

"It 's my own dear Annie," he said; and he put his arms about her and kissed her once and many times.

"Never again will I put her away and take another bride!" he cried; "no, not for all the dowers that there are in all the world."

Then the lady from over the seas stood before him, and she said: —

"Would that I could carry my sister home with me to the distant land, but I 'll leave her four of the five good ships that brought me over the sea. They 're filled to the gunwale with bright red gold; and there are seven other ships that are filled with shining silver, and six of them I 'll leave with her, so that if she would come to her homeland at any time, there 'll be ships, and there 'll be sailors bold who are ready to do her bidding."

HOW ROBIN HOOD SERVED THE KING

"BEING a king is dull work," said his Majesty.

"Will your Royal Highness be pleased to order the goldsmiths to make you a new crown, or will you ride forth in the royal coach, or will you graciously accord an audience to your faithful nobles, or will you deign to look upon the new gilding of the throne and brighten it by your inestimable approval?"

"No, I won't," answered the King. "I've done those things ever since I can remember, and so has every other king, and now I mean to have something new and different. I'm sick of palaces. The hangings flap, and I don't like it. There are too many cushions on my throne, and I don't like that. I want the sky over my head and the ground under my feet."

"Will your Majesty be pleased to walk in the royal park?" asked the First Lord in Waiting.

"No, I won't," declared the King. "I'm

going to the forest, and I hope there 'll be some people there that never saw a palace."

"There are some that ought to see a gallows," muttered the First High Councilor to himself, but to the King he said: —

"Has your Majesty no fear of harm to your invaluable life? They say that Robin Hood himself has been seen not far from here."

"I don't believe Robin is half so bad as the Sheriff of Nottingham is always making him out to be. Any way, I 'm the King, and I 'm not afraid to meet him; for if I was afraid of any man in my kingdom, then he 'd be the King and I 'd be — I don't know what. Get the horses, and a dozen of you go with me, and then if Robin shoots us all — why, they 'll make me a saint. They made George a saint for clearing the land of one dragon, and I shall have cleared it of thirteen useless men, and that 's better."

"Your Majesty's jests are always so brilliant," said one of the courtiers.

"Jest! that 's no jest. That 's the multiplication table — thirteen times one is thirteen," declared the King.

So the King and the twelve Lords in Waiting went out into the forest; but when it was time to return, the King would not return.

"Why should I go back?" he queried. "They've been making laws for five hundred years, and they can get along without any new ones for one while."

Then the twelve lords had to build up the best shelter that they could, and shoot deer and rabbits and catch fish in the rivers for their food. They hoped that the King would soon be tired of it all, and they were quite discouraged when he said: —

"I don't see that Robin intends to come to court. Get thirteen monks' cloaks and we'll go to call on him."

Very unwillingly the lords put on the monks' cloaks, and mounted their horses, and rode from Fountain Abbey down to Bernisdale, and there stood Robin Hood with some of his men. He took the King's horse by the bridle: —

"Abbot," said he, "I know you churchmen well. You live in pomp and pride, and you starve the poor men that pay you tithes."

"I am a messenger from the King," declared his Majesty.

"A curse light upon every one that would work him harm," said Robin.

"Are you not cursing yourself?" asked the King.

"I am a true man," said Robin, "and I 've never yet hurt any man who was honest. I never harm the husbandman or the hunter or the parish priest; but when I meet friar or monk or bishop who lives on other men's toil, then I empty his pockets that I may fill the poor man's."

Robin led the King to his abode, and the twelve lords in their monks' cloaks followed trembling. In a moment Robin blew his horn, and one hundred and ten of his good men came marching up and bent the knee before him.

"Pay your reverence to this man too," bade Robin, "for he is a messenger from our own good King."

A great banquet was spread, and they all drank to the health of the King till two barrels of ale and two tuns of wine had flowed.

"Show the King's messenger what you

can do," commanded Robin; and then came such brave archery as neither the King nor the twelve lords had ever seen.

"I thank you heartily," said the guest, "and I would gladly return your kindness. If I could get your pardon from the King, would you be true to him?"

"In faith I would," answered Robin, "and so would every one of my men."

"I 'm the King myself," said his Majesty. "Come up to Nottingham town and I 'll give you a pardon as big as a cartwheel, and I 'll give you fifty pounds of good red gold to go with it. Do you go into the town first," he added, for he was now in most merry mood, and was minded to see what would come of it all.

Then Robin and all his men drew up in line and marched into Nottingham town. They blew their horns so loud and rode so fearlessly that all the people thought that some bold outlaws had come to take the town. The ploughman left his plough in the furrow and ran, and the blacksmith ran so fast that he forgot to drop the red-hot iron that he held in his tongs. The housewife

threw her best bed over her shoulder and ran with all her might, scattering feathers all the way behind her. The cook was just lifting an iron pot off from the fire, and she ran with it still in her hand, and the hot potatoes fell to the right and to the left as she scurried along. The barber had bought him a new pole, and he had no mind to let that fall into the hands of the vagabonds, so he put it over his shoulder and ran. The goodwife had just baked a cake, and she put it under her arm and ran, not knowing that the little boys were following on behind her and picking out the plums as they went along. There was no time to take the baby out of the cradle, so the nurse caught up cradle and all. The baby rolled out on the turf, but the nurse ran on with the cradle. The baker was making his bread, and he ran with both hands full of dough to throw at the rogues that had come to town. The blind beggars found that they could see, and the lame beggars found that they could walk, and they all ran away together. The dogs scampered wildly to and fro and looked as proud and important as so many drum

majors; and the cats ran up into the trees and spit at the dogs as they went by. The King laughed heartily. He threw off his monk's cloak and called: —

"Stop! come back, all you good people. I'm the King, and this is Robin Hood, and I've been his dinner guest, and it isn't polite for a man to hang his host, so I've pardoned him. Now, Master Sheriff, don't you be too hard on our good men and true who live in the merry greenwood."

"The Lord Sheriff has honored me by dining with me and passing the night in my company," said Robin, with a sly glance at the Sheriff.

"Did you pay your reckoning?" demanded the King, turning suddenly upon the Sheriff, who stammered and said he "believed not."

"Now 's the time," said the King. "I was a dinner guest and I gave my host fifty pounds. You spent the night with him and had your dinner too, and you ought to give him at least one hundred pounds. There 's no time like now, so draw out your long purse and count it down." Then the Sheriff

had to draw out his long purse and count down one hundred pounds.

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Robin with pretended meekness; "and might I be so bold, your Royal Highness, as to ask a favor of the Lord Sheriff?"

"Of course you may," declared the King. "He 'll be only too glad to do you a good turn." Then Robin said to the Sheriff: —

"There 's one of my men who would be the better for a little stay in the town. Will your Lordship be so good as to make him the porter at your gate for but three days?"

"Of course he will!" exclaimed the King, and the Sheriff was forced to smile and answer: —

"Most willingly, good Robin Hood."

Then Robin and his men all made their submission to the King, and he gave them a pardon as big as a cartwheel, and away they went back to the good greenwood, — all but Little John, who stayed in town to be the porter of the Lord Sheriff for three days.

Now when night came, the Sheriff went to bed in a little room high up in the tower,

and bolted his door well, for he knew not what might come to pass before the light of the morning. Just as the bell rang twelve, there was a knock. The Sheriff pretended to be asleep, but it was of no use, for Little John put his shoulder to the door and broke away the bolt.

"Here 's a guest for you," he called. "Do you bid me bring the best wine and the best white bread for him?"

"Yes, surely," answered the Sheriff, trembling, for he saw that the guest was no other than William Scarlet. The porter brought up the best wine and the best white bread, and the guest ate heartily. Then he drew forth his wallet and brought out a little loaf that was made of the acorn meal, and said: —

"You gave me so willingly of your bread that I will give you of mine;" and the Sheriff dared not refuse to eat the bitter loaf to the last crumb. Then the stranger said: —

"Now that you have so generously given me of your wine, I will give you of mine;" and he gave the Sheriff a bottle of water. The Sheriff seized it eagerly, but it was water from the salt sea.

"Drink it," ordered the stranger, and the Sheriff drank it. Just before the first ray of the morning, the stranger said farewell and departed.

The second night the Sheriff fastened his door with two bolts; but as the bell rang twelve, there was a knock, and although the Sheriff again pretended to be asleep, Little John put his shoulder to the door and broke both bolts.

"Here is a sick man," said he, "and your goodness of heart is so great that I know you would rather get up from your bed and lie on the floor to make him comfortable."

Then the Sheriff got up shivering and laid himself down on the cold stone floor, while the sick man, who looked much like a very well man, lay in the soft, warm bed. Just before the first ray of the morning, Friar Tuck arose from the bed, said farewell, and departed.

The third night the Sheriff fastened his door with three bolts and went to bed feeling very safe; but just as the bell rang twelve, there was a knock at the door. The Sheriff called out: —

"You can't get in here, you rascals!" but Little John put his shoulder to the door, and in a moment all three bolts gave way.

"There is a stranger here who has lost his way," said Little John. "I knew that you would wish to come and show him which road to take. He is in haste, so you need not stop to dress yourself."

The Sheriff was mortally afraid, and he trembled so that he almost fell down the stairs. At the door Little John took one arm and the traveler the other, and the Sheriff was forced to walk between them wherever they chose to take him.

They led him through the silent streets of Nottingham, and the watchmen at the gate only turned their backs and pretended to hear nothing, as the three men went out beyond the city wall. Far along the highway they walked without saying a word, and then up a little hill.

"They 're going to hang me!" thought the poor frightened Sheriff, for he knew well that at the top of this little hill stood the gloomy gallows-tree. The Sheriff was right, for when they came to the top of the hill,

the traveler drew forth from under his cloak a strong new rope, and he and Little John slipped it over the Sheriff's head.

"Now pull him up," bade the traveler, and Little John pulled; but before he pulled, he slipped the rope down over the Sheriff's shoulders till it was about his waist. High up in the air swung the Sheriff, and there he stayed, with Little John and Robin Hood to watch him, until the first light of the morning was coming behind the hills.

"You hanged a man a week ago but for to get his gold and gear," said Robin. "I 've sworn to be a true servant of the King, and the first thing that I 'll do for him is to give him an honest sheriff. You 'll find your clothes at the foot of the hill, and the man at the city gate will look far away to the south as you turn to the north. You can say to the King that you 've been out ever since the bell rang twelve to make sure that bad men should do no harm in his fair town of Nottingham."

After this the Sheriff hanged no more men to get their gold and gear.

THE FALSE KNIGHT

GOODMAN," said his goodwife, "our wee laddie wants to go to the school."

"And what does he want to go to the school for?" asked the goodman. "When I sell a sheep on a market day, can't he count the silver shillings as well as I can?"

"But he wants to go."

"It 's only great folks' sons that go to the school," objected the goodman.

"And you 'd be as fine a knight as any of them," said his goodwife shrewdly, "if only you had a helmet and a sword and a shield." Then the goodman had a thought, but all he said was:—

"Well, goodwife, if he goes to school, he shall drive a flock of sheep with him, for they 'd be as good at the learning as he."

"So he shall," thought the goodwife, "and he shall sell one of them by the way and buy him some books, and he shall have just as many as if he was a knight's son."

So the wee laddie set out for school with a whip and a flock of sheep; and on the way

he sold a sheep, and he bought a great pack of books that he carried on his back, all but one, and that was wide open in his left hand, while his whip was in his right; and as he went along, he drove the sheep with the whip, and he studied from his book, and he said aloud: —

"B-a, ba; b-a, ba."

He went down the lane and on the road through the woods, and at last he was in the king's highway, and when he came to the crossroads, there was a knight on horseback. He had a helmet and a sword and a lance and a shield; and as the wee laddie came up, saying at the top of his voice, "B-a, ba; b-a, ba," the knight held his lance across the road and said: —

"Stop, and tell me where you are going."

"I 'm going to the school, and I 'm studying my lesson. B-a, ba; b-a, ba," said the wee laddie.

"What 's that on your back?" asked the knight.

"It 's my books," said the wee laddie, and he went on, "B-a, ba; b-e, be."

"And what have you on your arm?" asked the knight.

"It 's my whip," said the wee laddie; but he did not stop his "B-a, ba; b-e, be."

"Whose sheep are those?" asked the knight.

"Mine and my mother's," said the wee laddie. "B-a, ba; b-e, be; b-i, bi."

"How many of them are mine?" asked the knight.

"Every one that has a blue tail," said the wee laddie. "B-a, ba; b-e, be; b-i, bi; ba, be, bi."

Then the knight pretended to be angry that so wee a laddie should get the better of him, and he said: —

"I wish you were up in yonder tree."

"With a good ladder under me," retorted the wee laddie, and he called louder than ever:

"B-a, ba; b-e, be;
B-i, bi; and a ba, be, bi;
B-o, bo" —

But the knight broke in upon him and said: —

"Then I wish that the ladder would break."

"And you 'd have a fall. B-o, bo, and a ba, be, bi, bo."

"I wish you were in the sea," said the knight.

"With a good strong boat under me. B-u, bu," called the wee laddie.

"Then I 'll wish that the boat would break in two," cried the knight.

"And you 'd be drowned. Ba, be, bi, bo, bu," said the boy.

"You 're clean daft," said the knight. "Get along to your school, and I 'll drive the sheep myself."

So the wee laddie let the stranger knight have the sheep, and he went on happily to school. When he came home, his mother said: —

"Now, wee laddie, tell us what you have learned at school;" and the wee laddie stood up before the fireplace and put his hands behind his back and repeated: —

"B-a, ba; b-e, be;
B-i, bi; and a ba, be, bi;
B-o, bo; and a ba, be, bi, bo;
B-u, bu; and a ba, be, bi, bo, bu."

"There 's many a fine gentleman's son

that could n't do that," said the goodwife proudly; but the goodman asked: —

"Laddie, where are the sheep?" and the wee laddie answered: —

"A stranger knight came along the way, and I let him have them to drive home."

Then the goodwife threw her apron over her head and sobbed: —

"And he 's only a stupid for all he 's been to school."

"How did the stranger knight look?" asked the goodman.

"He had an ox-goad for a lance, and a pig-knife for a sword, and an old cow-skin tied over a tin pan for a shield, and he wore a brass kettle on his head."

"And you 'd give the sheep to a fool like that!" exclaimed the goodman.

"But I knew it was my own father the first look I had at him," said the wee laddie.

The goodwife threw off her apron and danced for joy and cried: —

"And will you tell me who 's the stupid now, goodman?"

EARL MAR'S DAUGHTER

THERE is n't a butterfly or a bird that would stay in the house such a summer's day as this. It 's a pity if an earl's daughter can't be as wise as a butterfly, and I 'm going out under the green oak-tree to sit in the sun."

So Earl Mar's daughter laid by her silken work and went out to sit in the summer sun. She sat down under the green oak-tree, and she made wreaths of the oak leaves, and here and there she put in a white daisy. She laid the wreath on her head, and then she said to herself: —

"How I wish some one was here to tell me how I look!" She did not know that she had spoken aloud, but high up on a branch of the oak-tree was a dove, and it was looking down at her and it cooed softly.

"I did not know that doves could talk," she said, "but I am almost sure that this one said, 'Sweet, sweet.' I wish he would come down," and she called to the pretty turtle-dove in the tree: —

"Coo-me-doo, Coo-me-doo, if you 'll come down and live with me, I 'll give you a cage of gold instead of the branch of an oak-tree, and I 'll take you home to my own bower. The walls are hung with silk, and there 's a silken cushion that the Queen's daughter gave me, and you shall sit on it when you will; and I 'll kiss you, and smooth your pretty feathers till you are the fairest bird in all the world."

She was talking half to herself, for she did not really believe that the dove would come down; but come he did. He flew three times around the tree, and then lighted gently on her head.

She carried him home and put him into a fair golden cage, and beside the cage was the silken cushion; and when he chose, he sat on the silken cushion, and Earl Mar's daughter gave him cakes and wine from a golden dish, and kissed him and smoothed his feathers till they shone like silver, and he was the fairest bird in all the world.

When night was come, Earl Mar's daughter saw that Coo-me-doo was fast asleep in the golden cage. She turned to bolt her

door, and then gave a last look at the cage to make sure that he was safe.

"It 's a wicked thief that has taken Coo-me-doo," she cried, for the cage was empty. "I 'll tell my father and the rogue shall be hanged."

From a corner of the room behind her came a voice: —

"Coo-me-doo would be in the cage if I was n't here, but please don't hang me."

Earl Mar's daughter looked around in affright, for it was a strange voice; and when she turned, she saw a strange man standing behind her. She knew that he was a prince because he was so handsome. He wore velvet clothes, and from his shoulder hung a long silken mantle, and he had a golden chain, and his sword had a golden hilt with a great flashing ruby. He held his hat in his hand, and the hat had a long white plume that swept the ground as he made her a low bow.

"Who are you?" she cried, "and where did you come from?"

"My mother is a queen," he said in a low, gentle voice that somehow reminded

her of Coo-me-doo's notes. "I flew across the sea this very morning, for I was the turtle-dove that you coaxed down from the green oak-tree. I've come all this long way to see Earl Mar's fair daughter, and it's she whom I love so that I would die for her."

"How did you get into my bower?" asked Earl Mar's daughter, for she could not understand yet how so wonderful a thing had come to pass.

"Have you forgotten the turtle-dove? It's not so soon that I would forget you. My mother knows magic, and she turned me into a dove, for she said, 'You like to roam and to wander here and there, and I fear you'll come to harm; but no one will hurt a turtle-dove, so a dove you shall be by day. But when the twilight comes, you'll not want to wander, and then you shall be a man again, so that you will not forget that you've a mother far over the seas; and some day you'll come back to her.'"

"Then you'll leave me some day?"

"I'll never leave you but to come back to you, if you'll be my own true love."

And so it was that Earl Mar's daughter

became the wife of the prince that was a dove by day. Seven long years and more they dwelt together in the bower, but no one knew that the prince was there, for when any one came to the bower, there was always Earl Mar's daughter all alone save for a turtle-dove that sat in a golden cage or on a silken cushion. Seven fair sons she bore, but Coo-me-doo carried them away when they were very small to dwell with his mother the Queen.

"The birds of the air know many things," he said, "and if I take them away from you, it is so that you will have them; if I left them with you, you would not have them."

One unhappy day Earl Mar's daughter was sitting in her bower, and Coo-me-doo was on the silken cushion beside her, when she heard her father's voice: —

"Put on the robe of blue silk that 's the color of your eyes, and put on the amber beads that are the color of your hair, and put rings on your fingers and a chain around your neck, and put a golden star in your hair, for there 's a lord of high degree that 's come to ask you to be his bride."

"O Coo-me-doo, my own true love, what shall I say to my father? for the lord of high degree will carry me away whether I will or not."

"Don't you fear, Earl Mar's daughter. There 's sometimes one thing, and there are sometimes two things that the birds of the air could tell even a lord of high degree if they would. Don't you grieve, and don't you fear, but put on your best attire and go to the wedding. Before it 's over, you 'll be glad that you are there, but the lord of high degree will wish that he was safe in his own castle."

So Earl Mar's daughter put on her jewels and her fine robes and went out of her bower to meet the lord of high degree. Her father took her by the hand and led her to him, and the lord bent low before her, and then he knelt on one knee and clasped her lily-white fingers; and as he kissed them, a great, round tear dropped from her eyes and fell upon his hand.

"For such a pearl as that," said he, "a man should give diamonds," and he clasped a diamond necklace about her neck; "and

here's a ruby, too, to keep it company." But Earl Mar's daughter only thought of another ruby that was in the hilt of the sword of her own prince, and another tear fell.

"I thank you," she said, "but there 's no man in all the land and the sea that I wish to wed. I 'd rather live alone in my bower with my dear dove Coo-me-doo." The lord of high degree looked puzzled, and said: —

"But I have strings of pearls for you and a great castle over the sea, and you shall be its lady. We 'll be married in the morning, shall we not?" and he looked at Earl Mar.

"Of course you shall," declared Earl Mar, "and to-morrow morn before I eat or drink, I 'll kill that bird with my own hand."

Now Coo-me-doo, sitting in his cage, knew what had been said, as the birds of the air always do, and he whispered to himself: —

"Time for me to go."

He flew across the land, across the raging sea, and far beyond the shore of the sea till he came to his mother's castle, and there he lighted on a tower. The Queen was walk-

ing out under the trees in her long crimson gown and with a crown on her head. She looked up to the high tower, and then she gave a little cry of joy.

"It 's my own son come back to me at last," she said. "Get twelve dancers to dance and twelve minstrels to harp and to sing, for my own son 's come back to his mother's castle, and he 'll abide with me for aye."

But the prince said: —

"No, mother, it 's not the time yet for the twelve dancers to dance or for the twelve minstrels to harp and to sing, for the mother of my seven sons is in great distress. Her father has given her to a lord of high degree, and to-morrow is to be her wedding-day."

"Then you and I and her own seven fair sons will save her," declared the Queen. "Now tell me what we shall do for her?" and the prince replied: —

"Instead of twelve dancers to dance and twelve minstrels to harp and to sing, get me four and twenty good strong men."

"That will I do," promised the Queen, "and four and twenty more if you will, and

we 'll bring home your own bonny bride away from all those lords of high degree."

But the prince shook his head.

"No, mother, Earl Mar has many merry-men, and he could bring out three to our one; but there 's sometimes one thing and sometimes two things that the birds of the air can do and he can not. Will you give the four and twenty good strong men stout gray feathers and turn them into storks? and will you turn my seven sons into seven swans, and me myself into a gay gos-hawk? — and then I 'll be a *bird* of high degree," he added.

The Queen sighed and said: —

"I would do all in the world for you and for your winsome bride and for your seven sons, but I fear me that this is beyond my power."

"Can you get no one to help you, mother?" asked the prince.

The Queen shook her head, then suddenly she exclaimed: —

"I mind me now of an old woman that lives in the lane under the old oak-tree, and mayhap she has more skill than I."

"It was under an oak-tree that I found my own true love," murmured the prince.

Now the next day there was a great wedding party at the house of Earl Mar. There were minstrels and there were dancers, and the guests walked up and down on the lawn and waited for the wedding train to come out of the hall; and while they waited, a cloud came over the sun and they heard a great fluttering of wings, and when they looked up they saw a wonderful sight, for there were four and twenty strong gray storks, and above the storks flew seven white swans, and above the swans flew all alone a great gay goshawk, a bird of high degree. They had flown over the sea to come to the wedding of Earl Mar's daughter.

They lighted on the tall oak-trees and looked at the hall door and waited for something to happen; and the guests, who had forgotten all about the wedding train, stood and looked at the birds and waited for something to happen.

By and by the wedding train came out of the hall door, and then something happened, for the four and twenty strong gray storks

seized upon the boldest men, so that they could not fight and could not go for help. The swans bound the bridegroom fast to an oak-tree, and then they flew in and out among the bridesmaids, and in the twinkling of an eye, the storks and the swans and the bird of high degree and the winsome bride were gone; and before long there was nothing to be seen of them but the flashing of the star in the hair of Earl Mar's daughter.

There was nothing that the company could do or say. An old man who was one of the guests shook his head awesomely and hobbled home the nearest way. Never a word did he whisper till his door was shut and bolted, and then he said to himself: —

"Old man, you 've been at weddings for eighty years, but such a wedding-day as this, old man, you 've never seen before."

THE WATER OF WEARIE'S WELL

DID you hear a far-away music, my maidens?" asked the King's daughter.

"What was it like?" said they.

"It was like all the sweetest sounds that were ever heard and like all the sweetest words that were ever said. Did you not hear it?"

"No," said they, and they whispered to one another:—

"The King's daughter is daft. It is only the running of the river that she hears;" but the King's daughter said to herself:—

"Then it must be meant for me."

By and by she called again:—

"Maidens, did you see a beautiful thing over where the wave beats on the rock?"

"What was it like?" asked they.

"It was like the sunlight and the moonlight, and the diamonds in the King's crown, and the pearls about the Queen's neck, and the morning light on the snowdrops in the garden. Did you not see it?"

"No," they answered, and again they whispered to one another: —

"The King's daughter is daft. It is only the spray of the wave beating upon the rock that she sees." But the King's daughter said to herself: —

"Then it must be meant for me."

By and by she heard some words so softly whispered that she knew her maidens could not have heard them, and so she did not ask; but she left the others by the seashore, and wandered away to the bank of the river all by her lone self. A bonny blue bird flew out of a bush, and as he brushed close to her ear, he sang: —

"Coming, coming, he's coming!" and then the bird drank of the clear, bright river, and flew up into the clear, bright sky.

"Oh, woe's my heart," grieved the King's daughter. "The bonny bird drinks his fill of the river, but my own true love who sings me sweet music and shows me fair visions does not come to me. I'll even go back to my own bower and weep for him, for my heart is sore."

"Coming, coming, coming," sang the blue bird up in the clear, bright sky.

The King's daughter went back to the palace, and as she came in at one door of the hall, a minstrel came in at the other. His robe was of sea-green, and it flowed and rippled about his feet like the waves of the ocean. Long strings of pearls hung down from his throat to the hem of his garment. His harp was made of a great sea shell, and as he walked he scattered around him bright bits of scarlet and pink coral. He played and he played and he played, and then he sang beautiful, strange songs of the caves down under the sea, of the mosses that waved to and fro with every trembling of the water, of brightly colored fishes that swam about and in and out of the seaweeds that bent over them and rose again when they had passed on.

"That is all very fine," said the King's jester, "but there are monsters down under the sea, and there are demons, and there are great, fierce ocean streams that seize one and drag him away and away to the place where all things are as if they never were. Why does he not sing of them? And then there are mermen and nixies, and they woo the

maidens on the earth, and down under the sea they carry them, and they steal the souls of the earth-maidens. Why does he not sing of them?"

But the minstrel in the sea-green gown kept on playing, and as he chanted of the world under the sea, he fixed his eyes upon the King's daughter. The King and the Queen and all the courtiers gazed at him, as if they were fascinated. They did not speak and they did not move, and slowly the head of every one except the princess sank lower and lower until it rested on his breast and they were all asleep. The Jester, too, was almost overcome by the magic sleep that was upon him, but he crept to the feet of the King's daughter and murmured with his eyes half closed: —

"Remember, my princess, that there is always one way of escape. There is always a moment when one may become free. Say it over after me, my princess," he pleaded; and the King's daughter said it over, but her voice sounded to him as if it was far away, and before she had finished the last words, the Jester was fast asleep on the floor at her feet.

Then the minstrel in the sea-green robe gazed long and steadily at the King's daughter, and the maiden rose slowly and moved towards him.

"Was it you," she asked, "who made the wonderful music that my maidens could not hear?" and the minstrel bowed low before her.

"And was it you," she asked, "who showed me the beautiful vision that my maidens could not see?" and again the minstrel bowed low.

"And was it you," she asked, "who whispered to me the words that were for me alone of all the world?"

The third time he bowed low, and then turning suddenly, he cast aside his sea-green robe, threw his arm about the King's daughter, and dragged her to his horse that stood just outside the palace door.

"You came to me of your own free will," he hissed in her ear, "and now you shall never escape me!"

Over the field and through the forest flew the great brown steed, and the nixie held the King's daughter with his strong arm so firmly

that she could not get away from him. The palace grew smaller and smaller, and then it was gone. The forest grew grayer and grayer, and then it, too, was gone. The clouds were different, the sky was different, but the poor frightened maiden said over and over to herself the Jester's words: —

"'There is always one way of escape. There is always a moment when one may become free.'" By and by the meaning of the words came to her, and she began to take courage.

Over the hills they went and through the dales; and at last, when it was almost the setting of the sun, they came to a lonely valley far away from the homes of men. There was a pool of still black water, and the trees that stood about it had black trunks that cast long, gloomy shadows across the water and across a great gray rock that stood alone in the middle of the pool.

"Wade in, my lady fair, wade in," bade the nixie.

"The water is so black," said the King's daughter, trembling.

"Wade in, wade in," commanded he.

"But the water is so cold," pleaded the King's daughter, and she shivered with chill and with fright.

"Wade in," said he, "and if you wade to the rock in the middle of the pool" — and then he laughed a mocking, goblin laugh — "why, surely, you will be safe."

The poor maiden could hardly stand, but she stepped into the cold black water up to her knees.

"Wade in," said he; "this is where I 've often watered my good brown steed;" and again he laughed, and the maiden almost sank down for fear; but she dared not refuse, though at the next step the water was up to her golden girdle. She groaned and sobbed: —

"Alas, the water is up to my golden girdle."

"Wade in, wade in," bade the terrible nixie. "You 're mine, for you came to me of your own will. Seven kings' daughters I 've drowned here in the waters of Wearie's Well. I 'll make you the eighth, and then I 'll toll the funeral bell for you all at once;" and again he laughed, and again the maiden

shuddered, but through her mind ran the words of her father's Jester: —

"There is always a moment when one may become free," and she turned to the fearful nixie and said calmly: —

"Remember that I came to you of my own free will, and grant me a boon. One kiss from your comely mouth would comfort me before I die."

"I will give you a kiss to pay for your soul," said he, with the same mocking laugh, "so throw your arms around my neck."

He rode a little way into the water and bent far down over his saddle-bow. Then the King's daughter threw her white arms around his neck and pulled and pulled, and the good brown steed bent his head lower and lower, and the nixie slipped and slipped until now the fair white arms of the maiden were holding him down under the black, still water.

"You 've drowned seven kings' daughters in the waters of Wearie's Well, and now you shall go to be bridegroom to them, and I myself will ring the wedding bell."

And then the maiden struggled until she

caught fast hold of the mane of the good brown steed, and with his help she made her way safely to the land. But the nixie was drowned; for although he was a water-sprite, the King's daughter had pulled him under water so suddenly that he had not had time to change his human form to that of a nixie, and so he had drowned just the same as if he had been a man.

Now the maiden was on dry land again. The great brown horse stood close beside her, and when she was ready to ride, he got down on his knees so that she could mount, all tired as she was; and they went away like the wind, out of the gloomy valley, over hill and dale, and across meadows and streams, till they had come again to the palace of the King.

Very soon every one knew that the King's daughter had come home again, and there was the greatest rejoicing that any one ever dreamed of. The good brown horse was glad, too, for he as well as the maiden had been afraid of the nixie, and he was glad to be with human people again.

"He shall have a golden manger and be

shod with golden shoes," said the princess, as she stroked his long mane, "and no one shall ever ride him but me."

"And the Jester shall sit on a high seat in my hall," said the King, "and he shall no more be called a jester, but he shall be called the Counselor of the King, and every one shall do him honor."

THE QUEEN'S CHAMPIONS

NOW that Robin Hood is dead," said King Henry, "we 'll soon make an end of all the bold outlaws in Sherwood Forest."

"Know you that he is dead?" asked Queen Katherine.

"There 's word come from the North Countree," answered King Henry, "that one of his own men was false to him and that he died on the gallows-tree by the castle gate."

"Think you that his own men would be false to him?" asked Queen Katherine.

"Why should not men be false to him as to another?" retorted the King.

"Why should not men be true to him as to another?" asked the Queen; but the King was gazing absently out of the castle window and did not answer.

"And what are you planning now, my King?"

"I 'm planning the greatest shooting-match that was ever held in Finsbury Field," said the King. "I 'll call out every

man that can aim an arrow, and he that wins shall be captain of all my bowmen, and we 'll clear the forest of the bold outlaws."

"I 'll lay you a wager that I can show better archers than you, my King," said the Queen, with a queer little smile about the corners of her mouth.

"I 'll take it," cried the King, "and we 'll make it three hundred tuns of Rhenish wine, and three hundred tuns of beer, and three hundred of the fattest harts that run on Dallom Lea."

"And if I lose," said the Queen, "I 'll give it to your champions; but it 'll take half the tribute from my own little dowry province for a good month to come."

"And if I lose," said the King, "you may give it all to your champions, and I 'll even send a company of good stout yeomen to bear it home for them, wherever they may abide."

Then the Queen went straight to her bower and called her little foot-page.

"Richard, my own little foot-page," she said, "it 's a long journey that you must take for me, even to far-away Nottingham; and

you must go as fast as the wind, for there 's a great wager 'twixt the King and me, and you must bring me the champion bowman that 'll be sure to win the day. Search the forest well, and ask for the champion of every good yeoman by the way."

"And what is his name, my Queen?" queried the little foot-page.

"I 'm almost fearing to tell you," said the Queen, "for there are those that say he is helped by the fiend himself; but he is a true man, I know it well, and I 'll whisper his name in your ear;" so she softly whispered a name that made the little foot-page jump for joy.

"I 'd gladly win my way to Nottingham ten times over to have one sight of him," cried the page, "and I 'll walk and I 'll run and I 'll lose no time on the way, my Queen!"

"Here 's my own signet ring," said she, "and when you find him, show it to him and say that the Queen bids him hasten to be her champion, and that she promises that no ill shall come to him or his."

So the little foot-page went on his way to

Nottingham. Sometimes he walked and sometimes he ran. He peered into every forest path, and he asked every honest yeoman that he met, but nowhere could he find the brave champion.

He made no stop for food or drink until he came to Nottingham town. Then as he sat at the hostelry, he drank a health to his Queen.

"Do you come from the Queen?" asked a good yeoman who sat by his side, "and what is your business so far away in the North Countree?" Then the little foot-page told his errand, and the honest yeoman said: —

"I know the champion well, and at break of day I'll lead you to him."

So at break of day the honest yeoman and the little foot-page went far away into the forest, and there they found the champion. The foot-page doffed his little cap, and dropped down on his knee, and showed the Queen's signet ring, and gave her message.

The champion bowed low, and kissed the ring, and took off his cloak of Lincoln green, and said: —

"Go to the Queen, my little foot-page, and carry her this as a sign that when the day comes and the hour comes, her own champion will not fail her." Then the little page went home joyfully and gave the message to the Queen.

The King had sent his royal proclamation to all the country around that on Finsbury Field was to be a shooting-match the like of which had never been seen before, and that the man who won should be captain of the King's archers, and that he and his merrymen should have three hundred tuns of the best Rhenish wine, and three hundred tuns of beer, and three hundred of the fattest harts that ran on Dallom Lea.

The day of the shooting came, and the King and all his archers marched boldly into Finsbury Field. With them was the Queen, riding in a beautiful chariot all bedecked with roses and fresh oaken boughs; and for a standard she had a hunting-cloak all of the Lincoln green. The King's musicians made their merriest music, the men waved their tunics of many colors, the women waved the green boughs of trees, and the little children

dropped roses wherever they went, and they all shouted:—

"Long live King Henry and Queen Katherine!"

By and by there was silence for a moment. Then the trumpets blew, and the King's herald came forth in a mantle of bright blue with shining silver fringe all around its edges and silver embroidery above the silver fringe, and he called out:—

"Hear, O you archers in all the land, for whoever shall this day approve himself to be the best of the archers shall be captain of the King's bowmen. Then, too, shall he and his merrymen have three hundred tuns of Rhenish wine, and three hundred tuns of beer, and three hundred of the fattest harts that run on Dallom Lea. This is the word of the King."

All the trumpets blared again and the drums beat. Then the King stepped forth and called to his first bowman:—

"Measure out the line and set up the willow wand."

"What need of measuring so carefully?" asked haughty Clifton of the King's archers.

"We be ready to shoot at the eagle that flies over yonder hill, or at the sun and the moon, if the King so wills it."

"Fifteen-score paces is the measure," replied the first bowman.

"Child's play," said Clifton. "I 'll wager my very bow that we win the day."

First shot three archers of the King, and their arrows went within three fingers of the willow wand. Then came three archers of the Queen, and their arrows were a full hand's breadth away.

"The King's men win!" shouted the people.

Then came the second trial, and now it was the Queen's men who were three fingers away and the King's men who were a whole hand's breadth from the willow wand, and the people shouted: —

"A tie, a tie!" and watched eagerly to see what would happen.

Now came the last shot of the King's men. One shot the bark from one side of the wand, one shot the bark from the other, and one arrow touched the top of the wand.

"The King's men win!" cried the people,

and the trumpets blared again and louder than ever. Then there was silence, for the Queen had bowed herself before the King.

"A boon!" she cried, and all the people shouted:—

"A boon, a boon for the Queen!"

"Whatever you will," promised the King, and the Queen said:—

"I have but three archers left. They come from a far country, and mayhap they fear to step forth among so many strange people. Will you give your own royal word that no harm shall come to them? Will you grant them forty days to go and forty days to come, and three times forty days to sport and play as they will?"

The King kissed the Queen's white hand, and led her to the seat beside himself on the throne, and he said:—

"Never does the Queen ask of me in vain, for what she would have is hers before she asks." Then the trumpets blared, and the drums beat, and all the people shouted:—

"Long live good King Henry!"

Afar off at the edge of the crowd there was a little movement, and soon three men

came forward. One was dressed in white, one in red, and the tallest of them all was in Lincoln green. They made their way to the dais and bent low before the throne. Then they kissed the hand of the Queen and stepped to the shooting-place. First shot the man in white, and his arrow cleaved the willow wand exactly in the centre. Then shot the man in red, and his arrow went into the hole that the first had made, and there it stuck fast. The Queen turned red and then white, and the crowd held their breath to see the next shot. The man in green bent his bow, and his shot split in twain the arrow of the man in red, and both arrow and wand broke into two pieces and fell on either side of the butt.

Such a shout of delight arose from the crowd as never had been heard before, even on Finsbury Field. The musicians played their best music, and the trumpets blared, and the drums beat louder than ever.

"The prize belongs to the three champions of the Queen," announced the King a little ruefully. "Let them come forward to the throne."

So the First Grand Usher in Waiting was sent to escort them to the throne; and as they walked along the pathway, the people cheered so that all the little birds fell to singing, and all the trees on all the hilltops waved as if there was a great storm.

"And who are you?" asked the King, "and from what far country do you come?" But before they could answer, the Queen said:—

"Remember your royal word, my King, that no touch of harm shall come to my chosen champions."

"The royal word shall never be broken," declared the King. Then said the Queen:—

"I myself will be your remembrancer. He in white is Much, the miller's son. He in red is Little John, and they both be servants of one that abides in the forest. Their master is he that wears the Lincoln green, and his name is Robin Hood."

The three men bowed low, and all the people held their breath to see what the King would say. Twice he opened his mouth, and twice he shut it without speaking. Then he looked at the Queen, and

there was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes that aroused him.

"The royal word shall be kept," said he. "Give bold Robin Hood and his merry-men the three hundred tuns of the best Rhenish wine, and the three hundred tuns of beer, and tell off stout yeomen that shall bear it whithersoever he will. As for the three hundred fat harts that run on Dallom Lea, I fancy that the champions can shoot them for themselves. None shall say that King Henry ever failed to keep his royal word."

The people cheered again, but Queen Katherine asked demurely: —

"And shall he be captain of your bow-men, my King?" It was Robin himself who answered this question, for he said: —

"Have we the King's permission to return to the good greenwood?" The King bowed with calmness and dignity and said: —

"You have." But as they left the royal throne he slyly pinched the arm of the Queen and whispered: —

"I'll get the better of you yet, Kate."

LIZZIE LINDSAY

THERE were many fine ladies at the ball, all in their pearls and diamonds and silks and satins and cloth of silver and cloth of gold, but the brightest eyes and the rosiest cheeks and the sweetest smile belonged to Lizzie Lindsay, for she was the fairest of them all.

"It's a fortunate man that I am," said young Donald M'Donald.

"How do you know that it's yourself that she wants and that she's not counting on the lands and the rents and the castles that she'll get in the Highlands?" asked False Gregory.

"It's to-morrow that we are to be married in the church, and never once has she asked me whether we're to live in a castle or a cottage," answered Donald M'Donald.

"Try her for twenty-four hours in a cottage, and if she does not wish herself back in her father's house in Edinboro', I'll give you all my land in the Highlands," said False Gregory.

In the morning the maidens dropped roses,

and the church bells rang, and the sky was bright and blue. After the wedding a fine carriage drove up, and Donald and his bride rolled away, and all the good people called out their best wishes after them as they went over the hills and out of sight.

"Should you love me just as well if we lived in a cottage, Lizzie?" asked Donald.

"Yes, truly," answered Lizzie. "If I had wanted only a fine house, I could have had it in my own father's home."

"Should you love me just as well if you had to skim the milk, and care for the kine, and sweep the floor for me, Lizzie?"

"Yes, truly," declared Lizzie. "If I had wanted only to be idle and to have maids to wait upon me, I could have had all that in my own father's house."

Then the fine carriage stopped. The footman sprang down and opened the door.

"But there 's no house at all here!" exclaimed Lizzie. "It 's only the wild moorlands. Call it back!" she said, for the carriage had turned and was almost out of sight.

"But it 's not my carriage, Lizzie. I 've no carriage like that. I only borrowed it of

a friend for a little way, and all the rest of the road we must go on foot."

Then Lizzie tucked up her silken gown, and tied more closely her satin shoes, and over the moorland they went. The hills were steep and stony, the valleys were damp and chill, the forests were dark and gloomy, and the wild birds made strange cries that were different from any that she had ever heard before.

"Shall we soon be at home?" she asked.

"We're not yet halfway," said Donald, and Lizzie gathered up her skirts once more and went on bravely, though there was a river to ford and a hot, dusty highway to travel over. At last Donald called cheerily: —

"Home at last, my own Lizzie!" and with his arm around her he led the way into a humble cottage. The roof was thatched, and the windows were so small that hardly any light came in through them. The floor was rough and uneven, and wherever there was a crack in the wall, it was stopped up with clay. An old shepherd sat just outside the door.

"I 'm back again with you, father," called Donald happily; and the old shepherd rose slowly and laid his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"You 're welcome, my boy," he said, "welcome as the sun on a May morning. It 's a long time you 've been away. It 's hard for an old man to be alone."

"Yes, I know it is," said Donald, "but I 'm back with you now, and you won't have to work alone any longer; and I 've brought a bonny wife with me. She 's the fairest lady in Edinboro' town, and she says she loves me well. She 'll be a good daughter to you."

"Will she help the goodwife care for the house?" asked the old man. "Our maidens do not wear pearls about their necks and silken gowns."

"Yes, she 'll help the goodwife," answered Donald; "the silken gown is only a wedding dress. She 'll soon learn to spin and weave a gown for herself;" and he called, "Mother, come and see your new daughter. Now you won't have to milk the cows and make the butter alone."

"You 're welcome," said the goodwife.

"Donald is the best son that ever a woman had. He was aye a help to his old father, and I know his bonny wife will be a daughter to his mother. The cottage is small, there are only three rooms" —

"But we 'll agree all the better for it," said Donald heartily, and he whispered: —

"Lizzie, are you sorry you 've come to the narrow walls and the three tiny rooms?" And Lizzie answered: —

"My father's house has wide-spreading walls and many rooms, and if I had wanted nothing but those, I should not have come to the Highlands with you, Donald."

"Our lady daughter shall be company this evening," said the goodwife, "and I will get the supper." So she brought out the curds and whey and poured it into the wooden bowls, and gave each one of the little family a wooden spoon.

"Do you remember when you cut these out of the poplar wood for me, Donald?" asked the goodwife. "You were but a wee, small boy."

"Yes, mother," answered Donald. "I remember it well."

"And do you mind the old Lord said he was proud of his boy, and some day"—

"Mother," broke in Donald, "your curds and whey is just as good as ever. You have n't forgotten what I like."

"No," said the good dame, "I mind well how pleased you used to be when you came in from the castle to see me, and"—

"When I came in from minding the sheep on the hills, you mean," interrupted Donald.

The wooden bowls and the wooden spoons were washed and put away. It soon began to be dark. There were no candles in the shepherd's little cottage, for it was the habit of the goodman and the goodwife to go to bed when the sun went down.

"Will you make us a bed of green rushes, mother?" asked Donald, "and spread over it the fresh hay? And, Lizzie, it smells sweeter and cleaner than all the fine linen sheets in Edinboro' town."

Early in the morning the goodwife called:—

"Lizzie, Lizzie! it's late in the day. The sun looks over the top of the hill, and the

lark is singing down in the meadow. The floor 's to sweep and the cows are to milk, and there 's many a bit of work that would be the better for younger hands than mine."

So Lizzie went out to the milking-shed. "But I do not know how to milk," said she. "The ladies in Edinboro' never milk. How do you do it?"

Then the goodman showed her how, but the cows were not used to so unskilled a hand, and they grew so restless that he had to milk them himself.

"Go you in, Lizzie, and help the goodwife," he bade; and Lizzie went into the cottage.

"Now the milk is to skim," said the goodwife. "Take the bowl and the skimmer, and go down to the cellar, and bring up the cream for the butter."

Lizzie had no idea what a skimmer was, but all the cream that she had ever seen had been in pitchers; so she took the wooden bowl and the goodwife's great pride, her one little earthen pitcher, and went down cellar. There was only a little light, but she con-

trived to fill her wooden bowl and went back to the goodwife.

"Little butter the castle folks will get to-day," said she, peering into the bowl. "Now put the bowls and the spoons and the curds and the loaf of good black bread on the table, and you and I will eat our breakfast."

"But where is Donald?" asked Lizzie.

"Oh, he ate long ago when you were skimming the milk, and he went to the hills with the goodman to see the sheep."

"And when will he come back?" asked Lizzie.

"Mayhap this noon and mayhap not till the night," said the goodwife. "The goodman's not so young as he was, and there's much to be done before the shearing."

They ate breakfast, and then the goodwife said: —

"Now I'll put away the bowls and the spoons, and do you set to work and sweep the floor."

"The ladies in Edinboro' do not sweep floors," said Lizzie, "and I don't know how. Will you show me how to do it?"

"Mayhap you wish you were back in

Edinboro' where you 'd have no floors to sweep," said the goodwife, looking sharply at Lizzie.

The little bride spoke up bravely: —

"I 'd rather sweep floors every day of my life than to be in my father's house without Donald."

There was a little sound outside the window, and she turned quickly, but there was nothing to be seen.

Then she tucked up her silken skirt, and tried to sweep the floor as the goodwife taught her. After the floor was swept, the chickens must be fed, and the pig must be fed, and then the cream must be churned, and the butter worked and salted and made into little pats to be carried to the castle. So it went on all the morning, and after dinner the goodwife said: —

"Here 's a stocking set up, Lizzie, and you might knit on that, if you like, and not begin another one till to-morrow;" but poor Lizzie had to explain: —

"But I don't know how to knit." Then she brightened up and said: —

"I can embroider with gold thread and

silver thread, and I know how to sew on pearls, and I can make roses that you could almost pick up from the canvas. Every one said I could embroider better than any other girl in Edinboro'."

"Embroidery is all very well for queens and such people," declared the goodwife, "but it won't keep Donald's feet warm when the snow comes and the rain comes."

"Will you teach me how to knit stockings?" asked Lizzie.

"Don't the fine ladies in Edinboro' ever knit stockings?" asked the goodwife.

"No," said Lizzie.

"Do they spin?"

"No."

"Then you must first learn to spin. Do you see those skeins of yarn hanging on the poles?"

Lizzie looked to the top of the room, and there were long poles hanging on hooks that were fastened to the rafters, and on the poles were many skeins of blue and gray yarn.

"I spun that for the goodman," said the goodwife, "and you must learn to spin it for Donald."

So the long rolls of wool were brought out, and the goodwife began to turn the wheel and twist the wool, and somehow it turned into yarn, Lizzie could not quite see how. She tried and tried, but the roll would break, and the thread would tangle, and the wheel would go the wrong way much more easily than the right. Lizzie had never done so much work in a year as she had in this one day, but the goodwife was saying: —

"Perhaps you 'll find the weaving easier. Come in to the loom and I 'll show you how to weave."

So Lizzie took her place on the hard, narrow, slanting board that made the seat of the loom; but she was no better at the weaving than at the spinning, for the shuttle was slippery and flew out on the floor, and her rings were continually catching in the slender threads of the warp.

"Should you rather go back to Edinboro'," asked the goodwife, "where the fine ladies do not spin and do not weave?"

"I want to be where Donald is," answered Lizzie; "but why does n't he come?"

Soon a voice, that seemed wonderfully

fresh and brisk for that of a man who had worked hard all day, called to her: —

"Lizzie, Lizzie! Let us go and take a little walk. Here 's a bundle of your nice clothes that I 've brought for you. Put on your very best, and we 'll go out." So Lizzie put on her very best clothes, and she and Donald went out into the beautiful sunset.

"Lizzie, dear," said Donald, "the cottage is not like your father's house. Do you wish you were back in Edinboro' again?"

"I 'd rather live in a cottage all my life," declared Lizzie, "than to be in Edinboro' town without you, Donald."

Down the shady lane they walked, with the wild roses all about them. At the end of the lane stood a carriage much finer than the one in which they had begun their wedding journey. They rode a little way, and there before them rose a lordly castle. Banners were floating from every tower, and strains of the sweetest music that any one ever heard in a dream came from the open doors of the hall. The sun shone on the windows until the great castle looked like an enchanted palace. The bells rang out joyfully.

"What is it?" cried Lizzie, almost dazzled by the beauty and the brilliancy.

"We'll go to the porter's lodge and see," said Donald; but when they came to the lodge, the porter threw wide open the gates and called: —

"Welcome home, Lord Donald! Welcome home, Lady Lizzie!"

Then all the little children tossed great handfuls of roses into the carriage; and when they drove to the hall door, a lady in a rich dress of purple velvet, with many diamonds and opals, took Lizzie in her arms and gave her a great bunch of silver keys, and said: —

"Lizzie, my daughter, you're the lady of the castle now, and all that's here is your own."

When all the house was quiet that night, Lizzie asked: —

"Donald, dear, don't you think you'd better send a messenger to False Gregory to tell him that his Highland lands are no longer his, but your own?"

"What do you mean, my Lizzie?"

"My little sister heard every word that False Gregory said that night at the ball;

and, Donald, have you forgotten that the first time I ever saw you, you told me all about your dear old nurse that married a shepherd? And there's one thing more, Donald, — if you wait for me to learn to spin yarn and knit your stockings, you'll have to go barefoot for a year and a day."

THE KING AND THE MILLER OF MANSFIELD

PART I

THE young hunter had lost his way. The courtiers were out of sight; not a sound of their horns could be heard, and every minute the forest grew darker and darker. Up and down he wandered till it was far into the night. The owl called lonesomely from the top of the blasted pine, and in the pale, silver rays of the moonlight the young hunter fancied that he could see all kinds of strange creatures mocking him, and he heard strange sounds that he had never heard by day or when his friends were around him. At last there was one sound that he knew. It was the beat of a horse's hoofs on the forest path, as some rider jogged along on a belated errand. The young hunter called out gladly to the unknown horseman: —

"Pray tell me, sir, what is the nearest way to Nottingham?"

"What do such as you want at Notting-

ham?" demanded the rider. "The King's court is at Nottingham, and I'll bet the bag-pudding that my dame will give me for supper this night that you would no more venture to go to Nottingham than I would to ask the King to eat supper with me."

"Nevertheless, I do want to go to Nottingham," said the young hunter, "and I was on my way there when I lost my road."

"I'm not the man to think that you lost your way for nothing," growled the rider.

"And what do you take me for?" asked the young hunter lightly, for his spirits were rising now that he had even so surly a companion as this. "You have n't had a glimpse of me. Wait and I'll come out farther into the moonlight."

"You stand back there in the shadow," ordered the countryman. "You talk of going to the King's court, you do, but you'll never go there unless the sheriff takes you. I know what you are; you're a gentleman thief, and if you come one step nearer, I'll crack your crown for you. I'm the miller of Mansfield, I am, and I know good corn from poor."

"You're half in the right," said the young hunter, "when you call me a gentleman thief, for I'm not a thief, but I'm a gentleman, and will you not give a gentleman a night's lodging?"

"I'll warrant you have fine clothes," admitted the miller, "and a sword, but I doubt if you have one groat in your purse. I've been to London town, I have, and I've seen young fellows before that wore all their fortune on their back."

"But I have gold enough to pay for all I ask," declared the young hunter. "Even if it was as much as forty pence, I could pay it," and he softly jingled the golden coins in his pocket. The miller hesitated, for the sound of the coins was music to him.

"Maybe you stole the money," said he, "but that's the King's business, not mine. A little bad corn does not always show in the grist."

"I swear to you by the King's crown that I'm a true man, and here's my hand on it."

"Nay, not so fast," said the miller of Mansfield. "I'll not take your hand yet awhile. You may be a wood-fiend, after all.

My wife's cousin's goodman saw one once, or he would if he had n't shut his eyes because he knew by the itching of his great toe that something uncanny was coming."

They went along together to the miller's house; and when the door was opened, there came out such a smell of good things a-cooking that the young hunter was more hungry than ever.

"Pray, my good host, let us have some of your goodwife's supper," said he.

"Where are your manners?" demanded the miller. "Did n't you ever have any bringing up? If you 'd been to London town even once, you would know that you must wait till the goodman of the house bids you fall to. I have n't had a look at you yet. Stand up here and let me see what kind of fellow you are. Dick, do you light a pine knot, and hold it up close."

"Look your fill," said the young hunter good-naturedly, "but see to it you singe not a hair of my mustache, or the King will be after you."

"Ha, ha, but you 're a droll fellow," laughed the miller. "You 've an honest face,

and I know good corn from bad, I do. You may stay with us the night, and I'll give you no worse bedfellow than my son Dick here."

"Your mill is turning too fast, goodman," interrupted his wife. "He's a handsome youth, but who knows but he's a vagabond, and we'll get ourselves into trouble by harboring him? Show me your passport, young man," she added, "and we'll know that you're no runaway servant."

Then the young hunter, with his hat in his hand, made so low a bow that the long white plume swept the earthen floor, and he said:—

"I have no passport, and indeed I am afraid that I never earned a penny in my life. I'm only a courtier, but my gold's my own; my father left it me."

Then the miller's wife beckoned her husband to a dark corner, and whispered:—

"Indeed, goodman, you mustn't be hard on him. He's one of those helpless younkers that have to live on what their fathers earned; not like our own Dick here, who can run a mill as well as yourself. He be-

longs to good people; you can see that by his fine clothes. Don't you be hard on him."

"Who but you ever thought of being hard on him?" retorted the miller of Mansfield. "It takes a woman to judge a man by his dress. You can't always tell the taste of corn by its color. Now I can see he's of good kin, for he knows how to behave to his betters."

The goodwife turned to the young hunter.

"Young man," said she, "you're welcome here, and though I say it as should n't, you 'll be as well lodged as if you were in the King's palace. I know what I 'm telling you, for my goodman, he saw it once when he happened to be in London town. I 'll lay fresh straw on the bed with my own hands, and I 'll put on good brown hempen sheets, and they're much finer than any other sheets in the whole village. Mayhap you're not used to such fine weaving, and you 'll have to be careful not to kick them out. You don't wear your sword to bed, do you?"

The young hunter laughed, and said he would n't this time, anyway, and then they sat down to their supper.

Such a supper had the hungry young fellow never tasted in all his life. There was hot bag-pudding, and good apple-pie, and fine strong ale in a brown wooden bowl that passed around the table from one to another.

"And so you're a courtier, are you?" said the miller. "Now courtiers wear satin clothes; and when they walk about, the pearls drop out of the folds; and they wear around their necks gold chains big enough to hold an ox; and the buckles on their shoes are all covered with rubies; and they wear crowns like the King's, only they're not quite half so high. I know, for a man in London town told me so."

Dick sat staring with his mouth wide open, but the goodwife nodded wisely:—

"Yes, he knows. It isn't everybody that has been to London town."

"I've nothing against courtiers, though," said the miller, "so here's to your health and to all the courtiers that you ever saw."

"I thank you in faith," responded the young man. "I pledge you in your own good nut-brown ale, and I am heartily grateful to you for my welcome."

"Now that we're all good friends," said the miller, "goodwife, bring on lightfoot." So the goodwife went to a little pantry, and pushed away a tiny slide that was hidden in the wall, and brought forth a venison pasty.

"Eat all you will," quoth the miller, "but make no waste. You'll not find this in many houses."

"In truth," said the courtier, "I never ate so dainty a thing before."

"You may well say that," declared Dick, "but it's no dainty to us; we have it every day."

"And where do you buy such fare as this?" asked the guest.

"Buy it!" said the miller, "never a penny do we pay for it; we — well, just now and then we make free with the King's deer over there in Sherwood Forest."

"This must be venison, then."

"Any fool would know that," said Dick. "We're never without two or three good fat ones hung up in the roof; but don't you ever say a word of it, wherever you go, for we should all be hanged if the King should hear of it."

"Never a bit more than he knows now shall he ever know from me," promised the stranger; and after they had each drunk a great cup of ale with baked apples in it, they went to bed, and a sounder sleep had the young courtier than ever before in all his life.

Next morning, as the stranger was mounting his fine gray horse, a great party of nobles came riding by.

"We 've found the King!" they cried, and then, one and all, they flung themselves down on their knees before the young man and asked pardon that they had lost him the night before in the forest.

As to the miller and his goodwife and their son Dick, they were frightened almost to death lest they should be hanged for killing the King's deer. The miller stood with his hands close to his sides, shaking and quaking; and his goodwife was wringing her hands and giving forth such shrieks that the courtiers forgot court etiquette and put their fingers in their ears. As for Dick, he was too amazed at all the wonderful happenings to be afraid, and he stood with his toes

turned in and his tongue hung out, waiting to see what would come next.

The King gravely drew his sword and looked at the miller.

Then the miller fell upon his knees, and put his hand over his eyes, and began to shriek louder than his wife, and Dick turned his toes in till they touched. His tongue hung down to the end of his chin, and he opened his mouth so wide that you could not see his forehead, and he, too, began to howl. The King raised his sword, but when it came down it touched the miller lightly on the shoulder, and the King said: —

"I here dub thee knight. Rise, Sir John of Mansfield."

PART II

"THAT was a fine progress, your Majesty," said the Prime Minister.

"Yes," said the King wearily.

"Your Majesty held a brilliant court at Nottingham," said the Lord Chamberlain.

"Yes," said the King.

"What an original idea it was to present

your Majesty with that cheese as big as a cartwheel," said the Lord Steward.

"Yes," said the King.

"The hunting was much better about Nottingham than it is around Westminster," said the Master of the Horse.

"Yes," said the King.

"The people all along the way were so happy in seeing your Majesty," said the Grand Falconer.

"Yes," said the King.

"What shall we say next?" whispered the Prime Minister to the Lord Chamberlain; and the Lord Chamberlain whispered it to the Lord Steward; and the Lord Steward whispered it to the Master of the Horse; and the Master of the Horse whispered it to the Grand Falconer; and the Grand Falconer whispered it to the First Cupbearer; and the First Cupbearer whispered it to the Page of Honor; and the Page of Honor whispered it to the Cook; and the Cook whispered it to the Scullion.

"The King wants something to do," said the Scullion; and this answer was whispered halfway back to the Prime Minister. It did

not go any farther because the King suddenly turned upon them and demanded: —

"What are you all about? I never saw such stupid people. Why don't you amuse me?" and he frowned at the Prime Minister.

"Stupid!" whispered the Prime Minister over his shoulder to the Lord Chamberlain; and the Lord Chamberlain, under pretense of an especially profound obeisance to the King, took the opportunity to kick the Lord Steward slyly. The Lord Steward pinched the Master of the Horse, and the Master of the Horse stuck a pin into the Grand Falconer; and the Grand Falconer stepped on the toes of the First Cupbearer; and the First Cupbearer pulled a stray lock of hair of the Page of Honor; and the Page of Honor slipped out to the kitchen and dropped a pinch of salt into the Cook's jelly; and the Cook boxed the Scullion's ears.

"Ow!" cried the Scullion, and his voice rang out all the way from the kitchen to the King's hall.

"What 's that?" asked the King. "That 's the first sensible remark I 've heard to-day. Go and bring him in."

So the Scullion, still rubbing his red ear, was brought in and made a bow before the King.

"Say something," said the King. "These people can't converse;" and the Scullion, trembling with anger at the Cook and with fear of the King, managed to stammer out: —

"Which part of your Majesty's progress did your Majesty enjoy most?"

The King burst out laughing.

"You're a brave fellow," said he. "These simpletons didn't make a remark that I couldn't answer with 'Yes,' and a king ought to have a chance to talk. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, your Majesty," said the boy, with a low bow, more graceful than the first, for his ear had stopped smarting, and he did not have to rub it any longer.

"I suppose the Prime Minister and the Lord Chamberlain and all the rest of them are thinking that a scullion ought not to enter their company," said the King, "and probably they are right; so I'll make you my own Royal Messenger. You're a good-

looking fellow, and I rather think you can talk the court chatter, can't you?"

"I will strive to do what your Majesty bids me," said the Royal Messenger discreetly.

"Well," said the King, "go to the court tailor and get a suit of blue velvet and silver lace, and have your hair curled, and be here before the wind changes."

The boy was off in a moment, and the King turned to the Prime Minister and the rest of them, his ill humor all gone, and said:

"That boy has put something into my head, and we're going to have the merriest jest you ever heard of. To-morrow is Saint George's Day, and we'll invite our new knight, Sir John of Mansfield, to the feast, and he shall bring with him my bedfellow, his son Dick."

Soon the new Royal Messenger returned in his blue velvet suit all shining with silver lace. His hair had been curled, and brushed till it shone like a duck's wing.

"Would your Majesty be graciously pleased to favor me with any commissions?" asked the lad.

The King laughed aloud: —

"You 've caught it," said he, with tears of merriment in his eyes. "You can talk it as well as the best of them. You 're an honor to your velvet. Now go to Mansfield and invite the miller, Sir John, and his wife and son to dine at court to-morrow."

It did not take the Royal Messenger long to find the miller. He dropped on one knee before Sir John, and began the speech that he had made up on the way: —

"God save your Worship and grant your lady whatever her heart does most desire, and give the young gentleman, your son Richard, that sweet, gentle, and gallant young squire, good fortune and happiness all the days of his life. Our gracious King sends you greeting, and bids you come to his court to-morrow, Saint George's Day, to dine with him."

"Whatever shall we do?" cried the miller in alarm.

"Why, thank the young man kindly," said his wife, "and say that we will go if there 's not too much corn comes in to be ground."

"You would better not fail," said the Royal Messenger. "I tell you there 's the biggest kind of a feast, and I know, for I 've been in the kitchen and seen it. The Cook 's uncommon good to me now, he is."

"I 'm afraid the King remembers — is angry," stammered the miller.

"Yes, I know he 'll hang us," said Dick.

"And I don't know how one should behave at court," muttered the miller.

"Well, there, I would n't own it if I did n't," said his goodwife, "a man that 's had the advantages that you have. A man that 's been to London twice ought to know how to eat dinner. My goodman — I mean Sir John — has eaten with a king before now," she announced proudly to the young fellow.

Then the miller remembered that he was a great man and need not be afraid of anybody. He straightened himself up, with his chin so high in the air that he could hardly see the Royal Messenger, and made a fine speech.

"In truth, young man, you have contented my Worship right well, and here are three farthings to reward you. See to it that

you do not spend them foolishly on your way home, but show them to the King. I want the King to see that I am not stingy with my money," he whispered to his goodwife.

"And what shall I say to the King?" asked the messenger.

"Say to him — well, let me see — tell him that my Worship and my Ladyship and my Worship's son Richard will be pleased to come to dinner, and that we 'll bring good appetites with us."

Then the young man rode away, and the miller turned to his goodwife and grumbled: —

"That 's only the beginning of it; first, the three farthings, and now we must buy new clothes, and we ought to have riding-horses, and servants, and fine bridles and saddles, and twenty other things besides; and mayhap they 'll want Dick here to marry one of the King's Princesses, and then we 'd have to buy cakes and ale for the wedding, and set him up in a cottage of his own. There 's no end to it when a man once becomes great," and the miller heaved a deep sigh.

"Now you just cheer up," said his goodwife. "Our Dick would n't take any woman that could n't make a bag-pudding, and like as not those Princesses never saw a bag-pudding in their lives. I remember one day when the King chanced to sup with us," she added loftily, "that he said he had never seen one before. You need n't worry. I 'll brush up your coat, and I 'll turn my russet gown, and we 'll put a pillion on one of the mill-horses, and Dick can take the other, and we 'll ride off as fine as a rooster on a fence."

So early the next morning they set out in stately array for the King's palace. Dick rode first. He had put a cock's feather in his cap for luck, for he was still a little fearful of what might happen. Behind him came the miller and his goodwife on a stout mill-horse, the miller just a little timid, but his goodwife quite at her ease, and convinced of her own elegance, for she had turned her russet gown fully two years sooner than she had intended, and if that did not make her elegant, I don't know what would. The King and his nobles all came out to meet them.

"Welcome, Sir Knight," cried the King,

"and welcome to your lady fair in all her fine array! Welcome, too, to the brave young squire!"

"And so you have n't forgotten me," said Dick, put quite at his ease by the King's hearty greeting.

"How could I forget my own bedfellow?" asked the King, laughing.

"I remember you took more than your half of the bed," said Dick.

The King and the courtiers laughed, and then the King gave one hand to the miller and the other to his wife, and with Dick following after, they all went to the banquet hall; and whenever the King spoke to the goodwife, she would let go his hand and make a curtsy, and then give the court ladies around her a look that said as plainly as words: —

"I know how to behave to a king."

Down to the table they all sat, and many a dish of dainties was brought on. The feast lasted so long that once the miller actually went to sleep for a moment, but his wife sat up stiff and straight and ate whatever was given to her. Dick sat back in his chair,

looking crosser and crosser, and saying, "No, I won't" to almost every dish. There was wine and ale and beer, and by and by the King lifted a bowl of wine and said: —

"Here's to your health, Sir John, and your kind lady, and your son Dick, and I thank you heartily for the good cheer that you gave me;" and he added slyly, "I wish that we had some of your lightfoot here."

Then Dick blustered out: —

"That's what I call downright knavery, to eat it and then go away and tell."

"Oh, don't be angry," pleaded the King, laughing. "I thought you would take it in jest. Are n't you going to drink my health in some wine or some ale?"

"Not till I've had my dinner," growled Dick sulkily. "You give us such a mess of silly little dishes. There's nothing to them, and one good bag-pudding is worth them all."

"That bag-pudding was good," said the King, "and I wish I had one now."

"'T is n't everybody that has his wits about him," said Dick, "but I have;" and while

the miller looked anxious, and the miller's wife looked proud at seeing her son and the King talking together so familiarly, and while the court ladies laughed till their lofty head-dresses shook most alarmingly, and the nobles almost rolled from their chairs, Dick pulled out a great bag-pudding from his pocket. The King pretended to snatch at it, but Dick was ready.

"No, sir," said he; "you may have all your stuff in the little dishes; this is meat for your betters."

After the feast came the dancing, and nothing would do but Sir John and Dick must dance with all the court ladies. When the dancing had come to an end, because the harpers and the dancers were every one of them so overcome with laughter that they could only sit and hold their sides, the King suddenly called for silence. Then he turned to Dick and asked gravely:—

"Now that you have seen all these ladies, which one will you select as a wife? Look well, and choose so that you will not repent."

"Just what I was afraid of," groaned the miller. "Oh, the cakes and the ale!"

His wife said nothing, but looked anxiously at her son.

"That is carrying a jest too far," whispered the nobles angrily, and the court ladies began to look pale and to turn their faces toward the wall lest their beauty should make them the choice of Squire Richard. They need not have been troubled, for Dick did not even glance at one of them, but declared stoutly: —

"I don't want any of your court ladies, King. I want a woman that can make a bag-pudding. There 's a wench at home that 's worth them all. She 's Jugg Grumball, and she 's the one that I 'll marry."

"Thank the King kindly," said his mother a little reprovingly, "and tell him that if it was n't for Jugg you 'd be pleased to pick out one of the ladies."

"But I would n't," declared Dick bluntly; "I 'd have Jugg or nobody." Then the nobles laughed, but the ladies did not know whether to be pleased or angry.

"Well, Sir John, I suppose I could n't induce you to exchange your wife for any one of them," said the King, "but I 'll tell

you what I can do. I 'll make you overseer of merry Sherwood Forest, and I 'll give you three hundred pounds a year — but see to it that you steal no more of my deer," he added in a loud whisper that set the court off into roars of laughter, "and be sure that you come to court as often as once a quarter;" and so they mounted the mill-horses again and went home; and every afternoon, when the dishes have been washed, the miller's wife takes her mending and goes to visit some of her neighbors to tell them what happened "one morning when I was at court."

The Riverside Press
Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.

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